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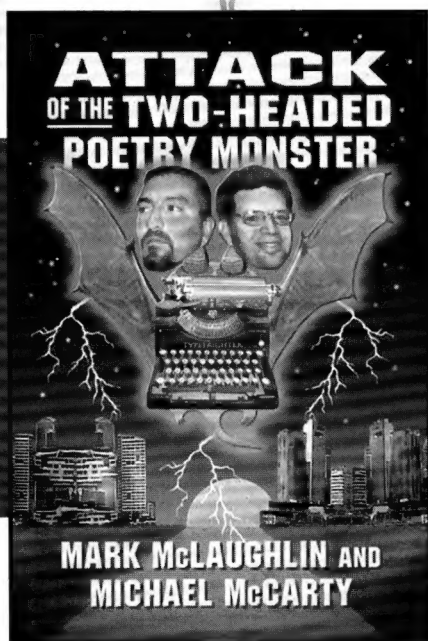
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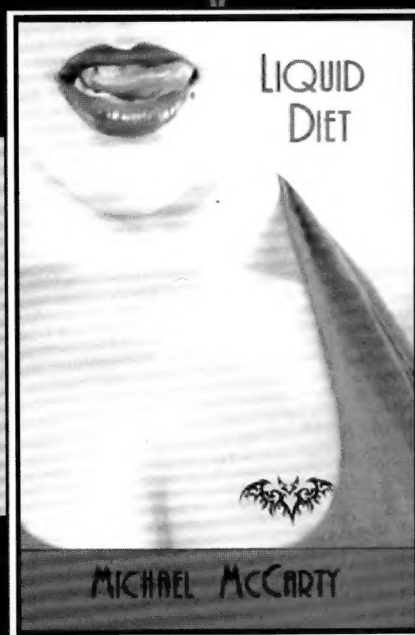
Vampire Writer



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and Michael McCarty, Bram Stoker Award Finalist
From Skullvines Press

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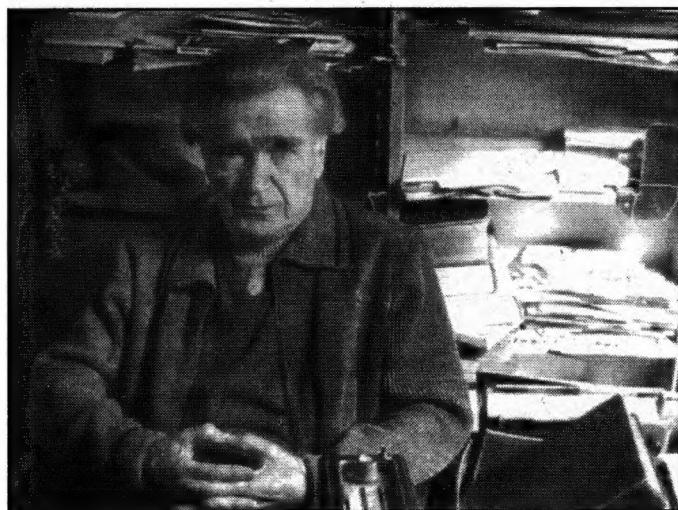


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*"To Live
is to Lose Ground"*

— E. M. Cioran

**BRUTARIAN
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Spring 2009

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The Continuing Saga of Dr. Iguana

The Story So Far



by Ken Burke

I've been interviewing performers of various types for over twenty years now. Some have provided me with warm and wonderful insights into their music, but most of them are completely lacking in candor. Granted, when they are conversing with me, the unspoken objective is to get me on their side and help them sell their latest project. However, these artists often forget that my editor wants a story that is at least in hailing distance of being interesting or entertaining. So, naturally, I get frustrated when a performer dodges a question, resorts to uninformative rhetoric, or just defers responding and begins gabbing about whatever bland subject his manager told him to talk about.

Subsequently, when preparing questions for an interview, I long for something akin to the following:

Ten Interview Responses I'd Like to Hear (Just for Novelty's Sake)

1. Personally, I think my new album is crap.
2. If my record label knew what good music was, they wouldn't be 385 million dollars in the hole.
3. My concept of the perfect fan is a mental patient with a lot of disposable income.
4. I got into this music thing to meet girls but after meeting the girls who are attracted to my type of music, I find that I now prefer guys.
5. Sometimes when I'm doing a triple-extended encore set, I'm really just trying to remember where I left my car keys.
6. The worst thing about becoming a star is that I had to give up my hobby of mugging senior citizens in the nude.
7. Influences? I partied with Donny Osmond once and when he told me about all the clean-cut, disease-free poon he was getting, I knew I wanted to be in the music biz.
8. If I can break the spirit of at least one

roadie per tour, then I feel my efforts have not gone in vain.

9. Hit records are like tattoos, they seem cool at the time, but twenty years later you'll do anything to cover 'em up.
10. I've been deliberately outrageous for so long now, I have no idea when I'm being offensive for publicity purposes and when I'm just being a plain old-fashioned asshole.

Please understand, whether music legends or up-and-comers, all are people whose work I truly enjoy. As a result, I've had to curb my natural tendency towards satirical lines of questioning. However, as with boogie-woogie, once the sarcasm is in you, it has got to come out - somewhere. So, to avoid potential unpleasant venting in the future, I have also compiled the following list.

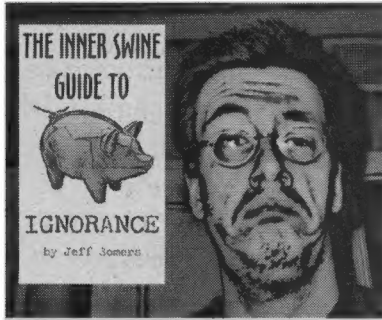
Ten Interview Questions I Haven't Asked . . . Yet

1. When you sold your soul to Satan for a career in music, did you forget to bargain for talent?
2. What's your smoothest pick-up line with a groupie?
3. Which part of starting your show late do you enjoy the most, turning the ticket stub into a lasting memento of your thoughtless behavior, or forever alienating your most loyal fans?
4. How soon after you score your first mass media hit will you abandon college radio?
5. Which is your favorite euphemism for being inhumane, selfish, and rude towards your bandmates: "challenging," or "focused"?
6. When you say you're "going back to your

roots," does that mean you're simplifying your style, or that you've given up on creativity and now plan to rip-off the successful artists of your youth?

7. The vast majority of your songs are either self-pitying or misogynistic. When will you be coming out of the closet?
8. If your friends warned you and you had a bad feeling about it all along, why the hell did you sign the contract?
9. How can you be so overtly sexual onstage and then condemn actresses who try to pump up their fading careers by posing naked for *Playboy*? Isn't that really more honest than what you're doing?
10. Do you really care about that charity or is this just a way to get free publicity on *Entertainment Tonight*?

Got a question you've secretly always wanted an interviewer to ask? E-mail it to me at: Drlguana1@aol.com and if we get enough of 'em, we'll put a list together for your entertainment pleasure.



The Inner Swine Guide to Ignorance by Jeff Somers

Episode Eight: Ignorance for the Win!

My wife teaches me things every day, alleviating the huge welter of my ignorance little by little. Admittedly, most of this education concerns my many, many failings, but hell, ignorance of something is ignorance, and through her violent and painful lessons I emerge a smarter—and slightly anemic—man.

Sometimes, though, these lessons are a little more general, if no less painful. Like, for example, the following recent example:

ME: Wha? Where am I?

THE DUCHESS: On the couch. Watching TV.

ME: Wha? What is. . . what is *that*?

THE DUCHESS: This is a television show called *Bromance*.

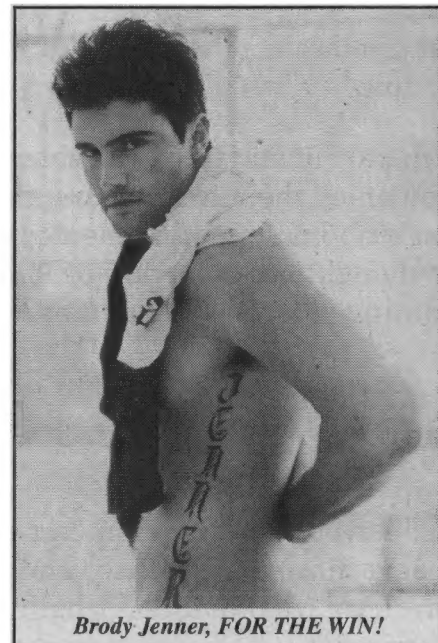
ME: . . . I wish now I could have remained ignorant of this show.

THE DUCHESS: Too late! HEY! Keep those eyes open or I break out the clamps.

ME: Yes'm.

Bromance is a show on MTV starring Brody Jenner, son of former Olympic star and current plastic surgery victim Bruce Jenner. The show is all about Brody trying to choose a new best friend. The reasons why he needs a new best friend and why we're imagined to care are difficult to explain if you aren't forced to watch this sort of terrible, terrible TV show in the first place, but, sadly, I now know all about Mr. Jenner and his awful show. I am, sadly, no longer ignorant about *Bromance*. Pray for me.

Of course, you never know - this unwanted knowledge of *Bromance* might come in handy. Bizarre and impossible as it might sound at first blush, you have to remember the fact that none of us know what's coming - there are no spoilers in life. So who can say that *Bromance* might not someday save my life? No one can say, that's who. As far as any of you can prove, knowledge of *Bromance* could certainly save my life someday.

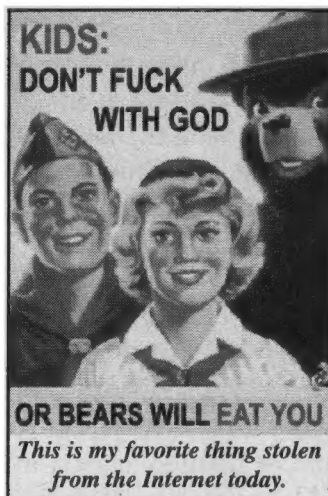


Brody Jenner, *FOR THE WIN!*

This brings us to the solemn and immense subject of our own collective meta-ignorance: none of us, simply put, have any idea what's going to happen, either to us personally or to the universe in general. We're always lagging a second or so behind actual events as information from our nerve endings travels along our sluggish and badly maintained nervous system to our brains; by the time you realize you've just been turned into slurry by a bus, you're already dead (which leads to an interesting thought experiment - since you only know you've survived this particular second of time a second later, how can you possibly ever die since you're always one second ahead?). You never know if today is your day to eat some flesh-eating bacteria, have a piano dropped on you, or be loitering within 2,000 miles of Yellowstone National Park when the supervolcano under it erupts, destroying everything in its path.

Now, everyone knows - or thinks they know - that we're all going to die. I can still remember that day about a decade ago when for some reason this finally slipped into place and I realized it with the full force of certainty. Before that, I'd still had something of the child's certainty in forever - the belief that the universe had only sprung into being when I opened my eyes for the first time, and thus I could never actually pass from its borders. But the beauty of our meta-ignorance is that we don't *really* know. We don't know squat. Maybe you're dying *right now* while reading this article (sad), or maybe you're a genetic freak who will live forever. Maybe you'll be the one standing in a wheat field somewhere when the super-advanced race of alien ants descends in their brightly-colored warships, and when the Ant Ambassador emerges with his Staff of Authority and informs you that if broadcasts of *Bromance* do not re-commence immediately, the Ant Lords will decimate our planet, and you will either be able to strike up a friendly conversation about *Bromance*, thus forging a friendship between our races forever, or you won't, irritating the Ant Ambassador into ordering an extinction-level missile attack on our quivering planet.

You just never know.



Which is why, of course, you should embrace every possibility to learn new things and acquire new skills - to remove ignorance. Not so you can be the Trivial Pursuit champion, or the annoying know-it-all who complains vocally at movies set in the past because they have the wrong type of shoes on the extras, but because you never know what's going to save you or your loved ones. I am constantly reminded of this when watching or reading entertainments - or real-life memoirs - where characters survive by their wits, which often include vast areas of common-sense knowledge I lack. Or knowledge I once had but have forgotten. For example, forest-survival skills.

A few years ago, my wife and I and another couple took a short vacation hiking in the mountains. Nothing drastic, a nice cabin and some easy, well-marked trails. We brought cold-weather gear because it was winter and struck out from the cabin in the early morning. The hike up the mountain was fun - not too difficult, even for a blubbery, out-of-shape man such as myself. When we got to our destination, which was not far up or hard to get to, however, both my wife and I experienced a sudden uncomfortable hypothermia, our hands and feet numb and throbbing. Our friends were fine, but we felt pretty crappy all of a sudden. My wife,

whose best reaction to emergencies, as it turns out, would be to pass out and be carried like luggage, went storming back down the trail, with me racing after her on aching knees, pleading for her to slow down.

When we reached a fork in the path, my wife insisted we go left, despite my mild objection that I was pretty sure we'd come from the right. I turned out to be correct, but from this point on we were both a little disoriented and worried - visions of surviving the evening in the snow and wind flashing through our minds.

Now, I was a Boy Scout. I was an *Eagle* Scout, despite constant disbelieving e-mails from other Eagle Scouts who like to quiz me on Scout Lore because they can't believe a drunken, profanity-laden idiot like me was an Eagle Scout. I've camped out in the woods. I've tied knots, built fires, and created winter shelters from fallen branches and old leaves. *Really*. Of course, I've forgotten most of this in the ensuing twenty years, so when panting my way through the forest in the middle of winter, I was struggling to remember some old scout lore that would help us, and failing utterly. My wife, sensing failure, refused to believe that I had any knowledge whatsoever that might help us and continued to storm forward, ignoring my pleas. Eventually I did convince her that I could, at least, read a map and compass to confirm we were heading in the right direction, and she paused for a few minutes while I did so. However, my memory of map reading was pretty dim, and I ended up even more confused, which resulted in the wife deciding, apparently, to leave me behind in an effort to save herself.

As it turned out, we *were* going in the right direction, and a short time later we were back in safety. No thanks to my re-formed ignorance of survival skills. To this day, my wife ripostes, "What are you going to do, build us a shelter?" as a withering comeback to any assertion of competence on my part.

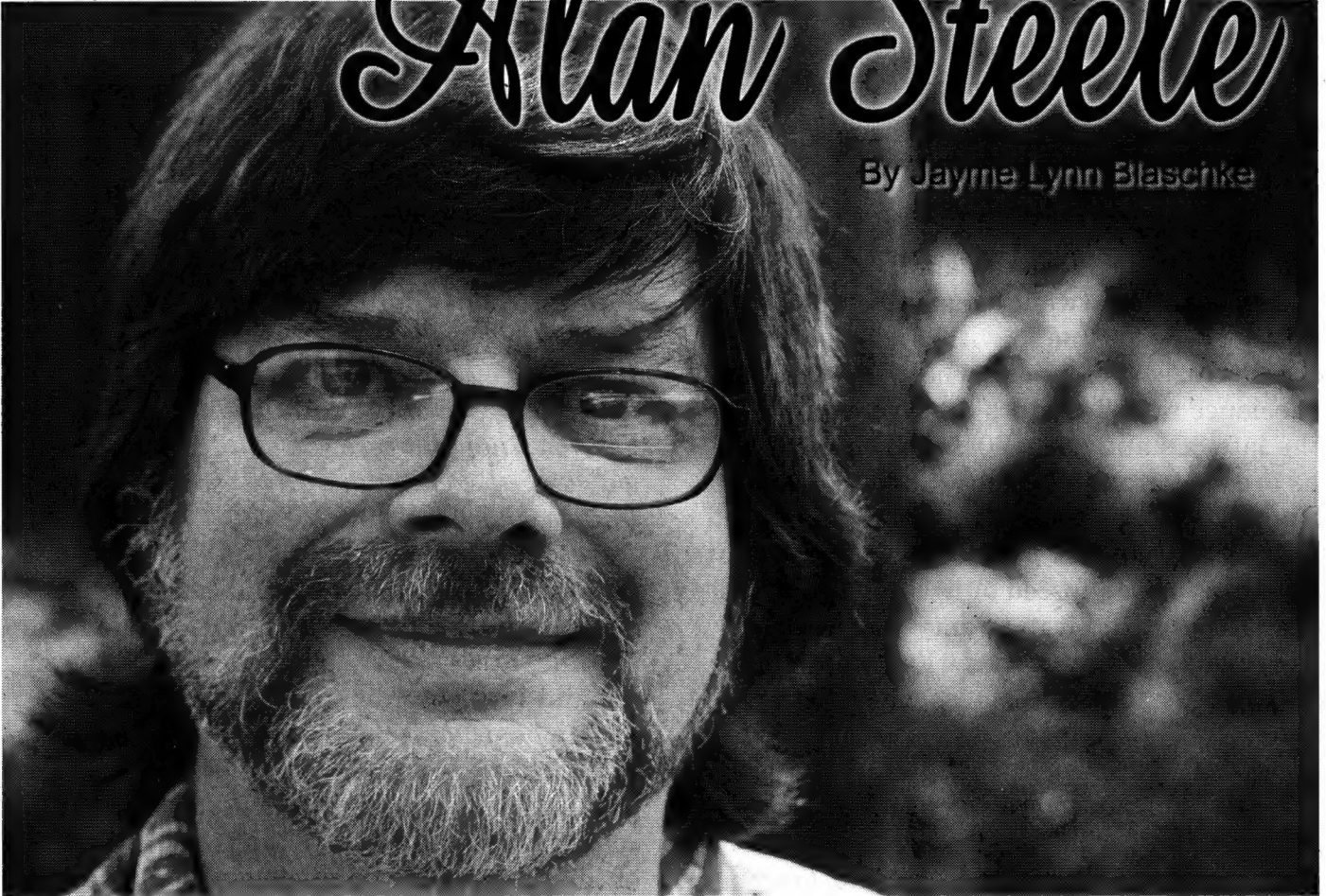
The point is, you never know what's going to be important. Calculus? Sure, seems pretty useless when you're in high school. And it has remained useless to me in the ensuing two decades. But will it always be useless? Or will I someday be sitting in an Ant-Overlord spaceship with the controls set for the heart of the sun, cursing the fact that I've allowed my calculus skilz to wither away? You simply can't say for sure. And you can't learn *everything*, can you? So all you can do is pay attention to everything you're exposed to, and hope that someday even something-like *Bromance* will come in handy.



An Interview with

Alan Steele

By Jayme Lynn Blaschke



Allen Steele published his first short story, "Live from the Mars Hotel" in Asimov's in 1988. Shortly thereafter, he left his journalism career behind to become a full-time science fiction author. He has since published fourteen novels, including five in his Near Space series and five set in his popular Coyote universe, and five short fiction collections to his credit. He has been nominated for nearly every award within the genre, including six Hugo Awards (two wins) and three Nebula Award nominations. His

novel *Orbital Decay* was named Best First Novel for 1990 by the Locus Awards, and in 1993 he received the Donald A. Wollheim Award. His latest book in the Coyote series, *Coyote Horizon*, is scheduled for publication in March of 2009.

A Tennessee native, Steele currently lives in Massachusetts with his wife and two dogs.

BRUTARIAN: The year 2008 marked the 20th anniversary of the publication of "Live from the Mars Hotel." Does this milestone

hold any significance for you?

ALLEN STEELE: One thing of significance is that story's now on Mars.

BRUT: *Oh, really?*

STEELE: Yes. The story "Live from the Mars Hotel" was included on a disc that was put on the Phoenix probe that landed on Mars. The Planetary Society put together an anthology, a digital library of works by science fiction writers along with artwork pertaining to Mars, that was sent to Mars on the Phoenix lander. So it's now there. It's a very surprising thing to find your first published story is now on another planet!

Besides that, twenty years is actually pretty good. I came in with a whole bunch of writers, sort of a post-cyberpunk wave of science fiction writers that came up in the late 80s and early 90s. A good many of us are still around - Robert Sawyer, Kevin Anderson, Maureen McHugh, Stephen Baxter - but a lot of people have dropped out. Some have been forced out. Publishing has changed quite a bit in twenty years, so I'm looking at this as survival. I've managed to stay published in a business where survival is not always guaranteed. I'm happy to still be around.

BRUT: *You've published fourteen novels in those twenty years, but also five short story collections. Usually, short story production declines for full-time novelists. How have you managed to maintain that output?*

STEELE: To tell the truth, I've gotten out of short stories lately. When you start publishing more novels, usually something gives. I did keep up my short story production for quite a long time, because (former *Asimov's* editor) Gardner Dozois gave me some advice when I was first getting started. He said that if you wanted to get a reputation in this field and establish yourself pretty soon, you ought to publish one novel and four short stories a year. I did that for

the first fourteen or fifteen years of my career. In recent years, I've pretty much gone over to writing novels almost exclusively. I'm not producing as much short fiction as I have in the past.

This is not to say I've stopped writing short fiction. Once I get through with *Coyote Destiny*, which will be the next and possibly last book in the *Coyote* series, I'll probably go back into writing short fiction. If, provided, the science fiction magazines are still around then. Unfortunately, I don't give the magazines that much longer to live. I don't think anybody's that optimistic about it. I'm surprised they've survived as long as they have. But if there's a place for me to publish, then I'll go back to writing short fiction. I certainly hope there will be.

BRUT: *You won your first Hugo in 1996 for "The Death of Captain Future." I have to ask you, though, were you influenced in any way by S.J. Perelman's 1940 essay "Captain Future, Block That Kick!"?*

STEELE: No, I hadn't even heard of that one before I wrote my story. In fact, a friend of mine, Rob Chilson, gave me that one later on, and I was highly amused. But no, I hadn't heard of it before.

What I was influenced by, of course, were the *Captain Future* stories themselves. I read those when I was a kid. It was a part of this fascination I had as a pre-teen with pulp fiction that started with Doc Savage and continued through with reading reprints of *The Shadow*, *G-8 and His Battle Aces*, *Conan*, and so forth. *Captain Future*, although he wasn't my favorite of those pulp heroes, somehow there was something about him that really stuck in my head. Many years later I decided that I wanted to try to write a pulp story for the 90s, and it came back to *Captain Future*. But I didn't want to do a parody, and I didn't want to do a *Captain Future* story, *per se*; for one thing, I didn't think I could get rights to the character.

So I did sort of a reflection on it. I did a story about somebody who's obsessed with

Captain Future to the point that he's trying to emulate him, even though this person has no right in the world to be *anybody's* hero, and how his personality conflicts with somebody who in some ways does have Captain Future's attributes, somebody who really is something of a heroic type.

It was a lot of fun to write and I can't be more pleased by the fact that it's remained popular, is still read and has been translated many times. Now there's even an audio production out there from Audible.com.

BRUT: *You've mentioned your love of the pulps, and I know you've come into a supply of Planet Stories. What is the continuing appeal for you of the old pulps?*

STEELE: It's something I've rediscovered lately. I like the directness of the style. I like, in many ways, the elegance of the stories. The interesting thing about pulp fiction for me is that the writers came into it with no agenda except to tell a good story and show the readers a good time. If they had higher aspirations than that, they remain opaque.

Now I like fiction that is political and has a point. I've written quite a bit of it myself, but I think there is room in the world for that which is entertainment for its own sake. In the pulp fiction of the 30s and 40s, they had that in droves.

The other thing about the pulps which I find fascinating is that you see the writers who became the greats in the years to come in their earliest, most primal stages. You pick up *Planet Stories* for instance, and look inside, and you're likely to find early stories by Ray Bradbury, Damon Knight, Leigh Brackett, Edmund Hamilton - who was of course a mainstay - and you see them in their full, pulpy glory with these rather crude illustrations and typos and so forth. It's a very different thing to be reading a very fine story such as Bradbury's "Pillar of Fire" in its original incarnation rather than in numerous collections and anthologies in which it's been reprinted.

It's hard to describe the appeal of reading a pulp magazine to somebody who hasn't actually held one in their hands and has leafed through it. But it's there, and those of us who love this stuff really, really love this stuff.

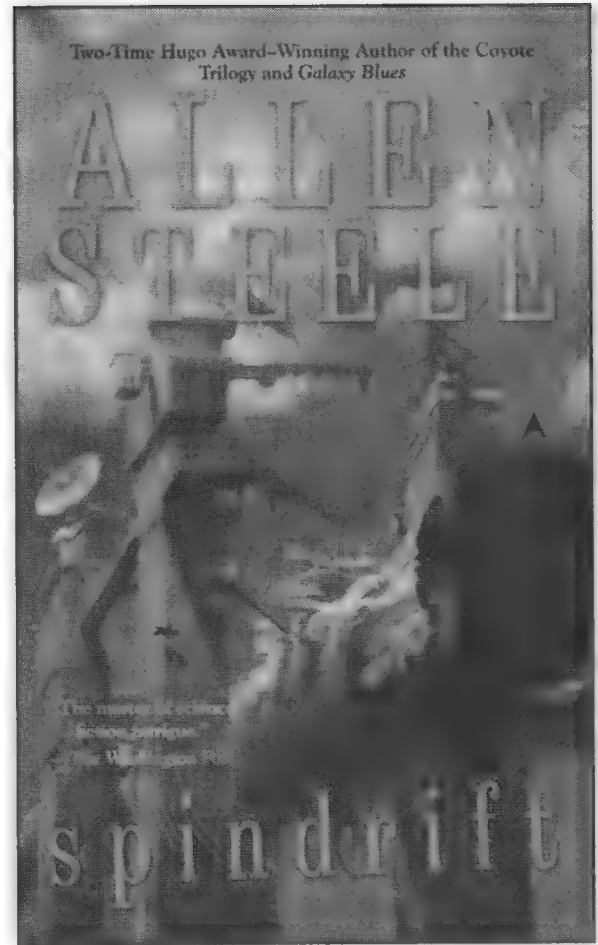
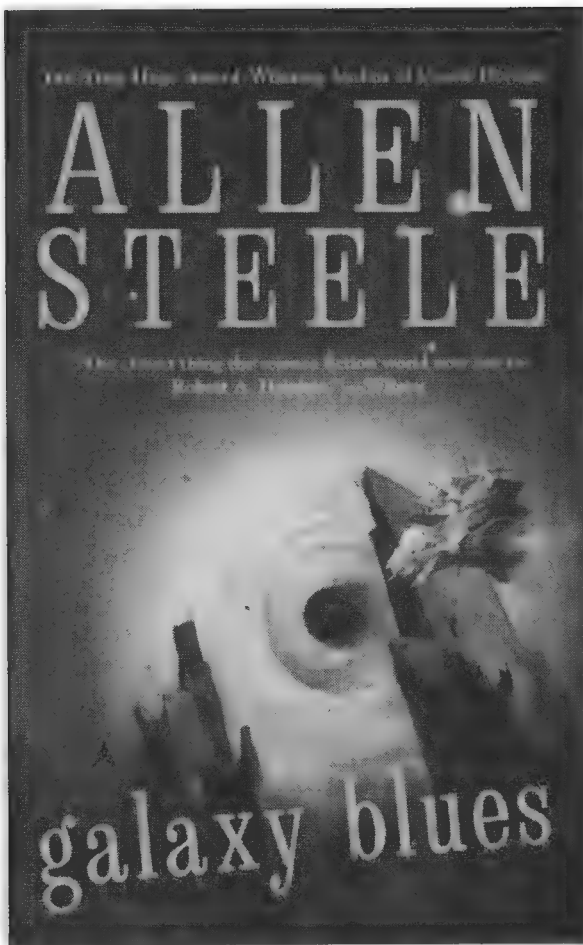
BRUT: *You've been described in various quarters as a writer in the Heinlein mold. Who do you see as your influences as a writer?*

STEELE: Well, I think Heinlein was an influence, but he certainly wasn't my chief influence. People who I emulated when I was learning my chops in the science fiction field included Frederick Pohl, Harlan Ellison, Robert Silverberg, Ben Bova, John Varley, Spider Robinson, Theodore Sturgeon . . . I could really go down a whole line of people, so I should probably stop right there.

Outside of genre, I acquired a taste for Hemmingway when I was in college. I always loved the gonzo writers like Hunter Thompson, who I made the mistake of trying to copy - you can't copy Hunter Thompson. I also made the mistake of trying to copy Tom Wolfe. Can't do that. I did study and learn a lot from the writings of John McPhee, Ken Kesey and Thomas McGuane. I started off reading a lot of science fiction and trying to write like that, but then I went through a period when I was in college where I ditched science fiction almost entirely. I stopped reading it, stopped writing it, and I began reading contemporary American masters. When I came back to writing science fiction years later, I carried with me those things I had learned from reading those writers. I began to reapply them to science fiction. I wasn't trying to be a Heinleinian writer, but somehow those sets of influences culminated in that particular direction.

BRUT: *Your recent novel Galaxy Blues ties in with the Coyote universe. What goes into linking novels that aren't necessarily part of a direct series?*

STEELE: Well, I guess I'd better talk



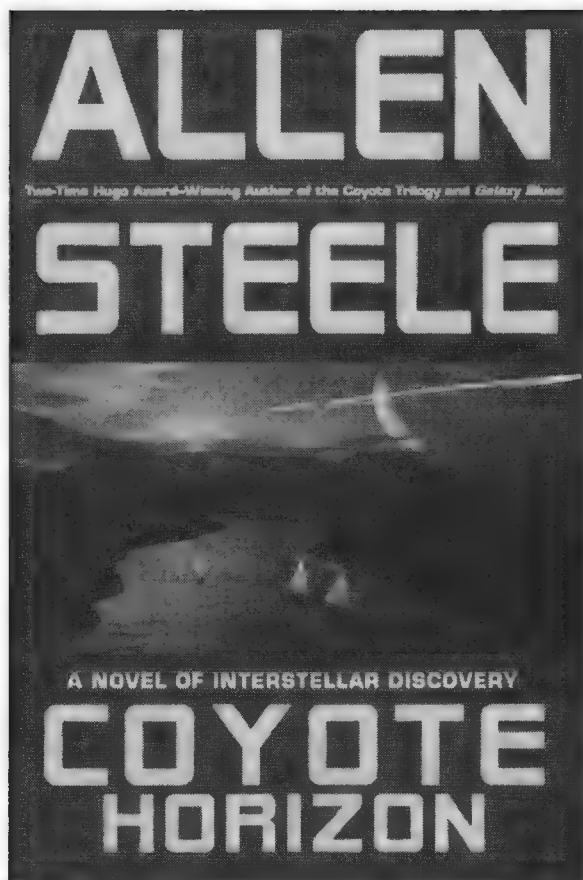
about the *Coyote* books in order to talk about that. The *Coyote* series was accidental to begin with. It was to be only one book. In fact, it took two failed attempts to write that novel before I got it right. When I got close to the end of that novel, I began to realize I simply couldn't do this whole thing in one book. I was going to have to write another one, so I worked things out toward the end of the book and I left room for a sequel. Then I wrote the second book, and when I got close to the end of that, I realized I'd tied up the storyline but had a great many thematic concerns that still had to be settled.

I was reluctant to write that third book, because I'd been saying for years I would never write a trilogy. Finally, my wife, who is my toughest reader, had the last word. She finished up *Coyote Rising* in manuscript and turned to me and said, "You'd better write a third novel. I will kill you if you don't write a third book."

Again, when I got to the end of *Coyote*

Frontier, there was a certain sense of great relief and satisfaction that I'd finally written this epic, but at the same time I realized I'd posed a number of questions that needed to be answered. So I decided, "Let's see about writing something set in the same universe," and this led to *Spindrift*. And the same thing happened again. I got through writing *Spindrift*, looked at it and said, "Yeah, okay, but now you've got another set of questions that have to be answered," and this required another book.

The point is, there was never any time where I said, "Gee, I think I'm going to write a five-volume epic, and maybe we can stretch it into seven." There was no master plan. There was no intent at any time to have this thing going on as long as it has. I'm in my eighth year of working on the *Coyote* series, and it'll probably be ten before I finish. It just happened one story at a time, because the first two novels were originally written as a series of stories for *Asimov's*, which was my



way of tricking myself into writing long novels in the first place.

Short stories became novels and the novels became a series. Now I've got two parallel series going on. I've just turned in *Coyote Horizon*, and that's the first volume of a duology that will conclude in *Coyote Destiny*. Ron Miller, the illustrator of the *Coyote* novels and most of the illustrations in *Asimov's*, and I are talking about doing *The Book of Coyote*, which would be interstitial stories along with a traveler's guide. After I finish that, I'm going to stop, take a deep breath and decide what to do next. It may be that I put a cap on it at that point and say, "Enough is enough. I've said all that I meant to say and why repeat myself?" which I did when I finished the *Near Space* series. Or I may say, "You know, I think I left something behind in that last book that still needs to be talked about. Let's go back and look at that."

I'm probably going to continue doing these things until I run out of steam. When I run out of steam, I'll shut it down and go do something else. I have other ideas for

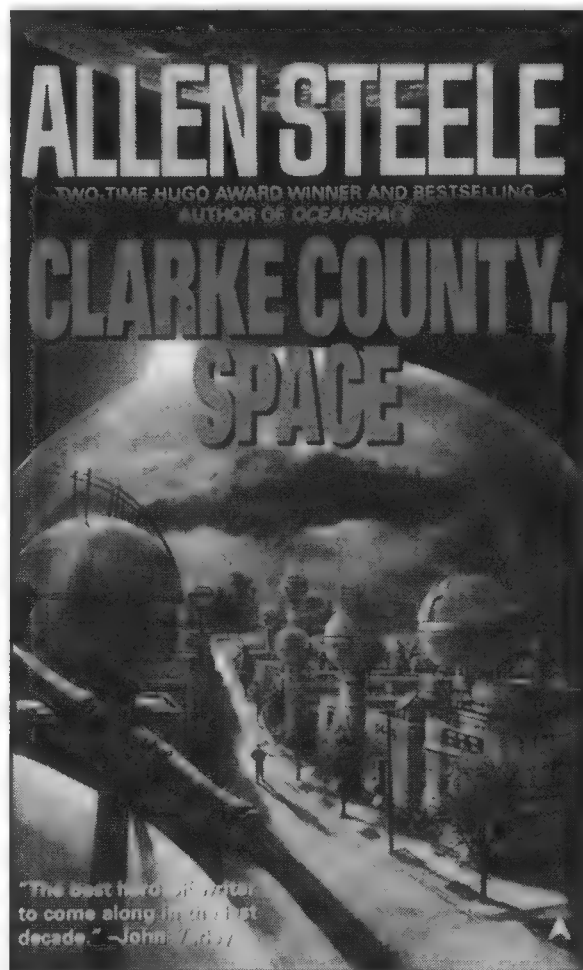
other books. That's not the question. At the same time, I don't want to stop when I still have ideas and still have an audience and everybody wants more out of me. So we keep going until I either get tired of doing it, or somebody slaps me across the face and says, "Stop now!"

BRUT: *How does writing the Coyote series differ from writing your earlier Near Space series? Is there any difference?*

STEELE: No. I mean the *Near Space* series was originally supposed to be one book, too.

BRUT: *A pattern emerges!*

STEELE: This is the second time in my life that a series has happened accidentally. *Orbital Decay* begat *Clarke County*, *Space* begat *Lunar Descent* which begat *Labyrinth of Night*, with a whole bunch of related short



stories in between. The big difference, if there's any, is that between *Labyrinth of Night* and *A King of Infinite Space* I wrote two other novels - *The Jericho Iteration* and the *Tranquility Alternative*. I think *A King of Infinite Space* could've been a lot stronger if I had written that immediately after *Labyrinth of Night*. Instead, I went and did these two other books. Now, I like all three of those books. I think all of them are pretty good reads, but I think *King* suffers a bit because I distracted myself. I got off on a completely different train of thought with those two other books, so this is why I'm writing the *Coyote* books back-to-back without interrupting myself. I'm getting them all out at once without trying to come back and recapture this place again.

It's especially important, because the world of *Coyote* itself is as much of a character in the stories as any of the personae. For me, it's a very real place. It doesn't take much for me to cast myself in this place and in my imagination walk

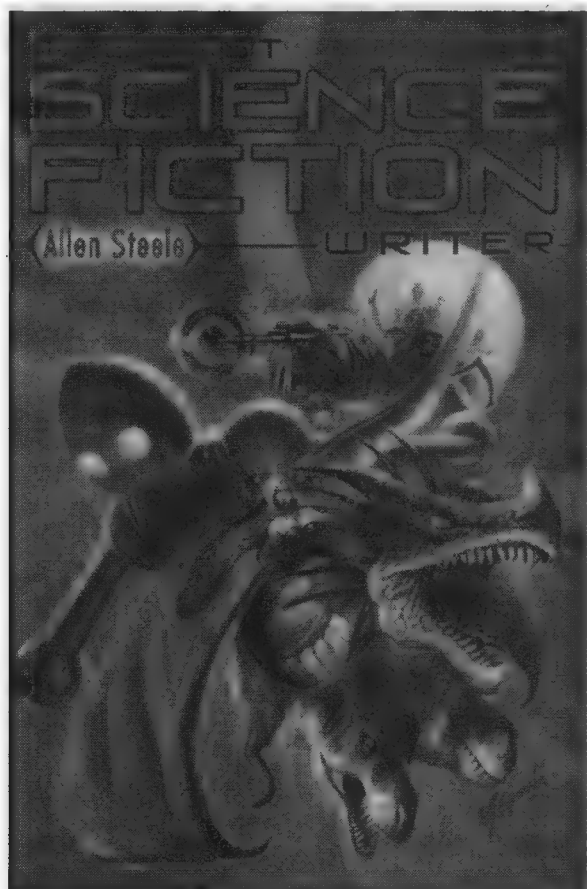
around there. I don't want to lose that, so I'm doing my grand tour of *Coyote* while I can.

BRUT: *What are the challenges in writing near-future science fiction versus far-future science fiction?*

STEELE: Well, with near-future science fiction the obvious problem is obsolescence. There's a real chance, especially if you're writing within a ten-year time frame, that real events can catch up with you. In particular, when writing hard science fiction, there's a real chance technology can catch up to you. I've been caught under that wire a couple of times. You mentioned "Live from the Mars Hotel." In that story, 45s are still the primary mode of music being played in radio stations. When I wrote "Live from the Mars Hotel," CDs were just being introduced. They were still a novelty item. I always thought they were going to go the way of laser discs, a fad that would come and go because they were tremendously expensive and there weren't very many of them out there. Yet, even by the time the story was published in *Asimov's*, that was clearly not the case.

Just a few days ago, I toured Johnson Space Center and visited the facilities there. I went to the shuttle Mission Control and visited the space station control room. I went to the National Buoyancy Laboratory, the big tank where the astronauts train for spacewalks. The best of all was that I got inside the shuttle simulator and flew the shuttle. I actually managed to get it back on the ground in one piece, although I kind of bumped around a little and fish-tailed. My flight instructor told me my landing was borderline irresponsible.

All of this was really cool stuff. I took lots of pictures and made lots of mental notes about things. I may use all that for a novel down the line, but I have to keep in mind this technology may be obsolete in ten years. I mean, the shuttle will stop flying in two years unless something radical happens. The space station, of course, will still be in





orbit, and the control room the space station is operated from just opened, so that's going to remain unchanged. Mission Control, I'm told, will be turned into the control room for the Orion spacecraft, and so I'd have to have to rethink things there a little bit.

If you're writing near-future stuff, what is drop-dead accurate today stands a chance of being obsolete in six months, a year, two years . . . who knows? It may stay accurate forever. It's both the problem and the challenge. Whereas when you're writing further out, in the 2300s as the *Coyote* books are, you have a bit more chance to play around a little bit. For one thing, everybody reading them now is going to be dead by then, so there's nobody to send you the nasty email, "Oh, you got that wrong" and all that stuff.

But the drawback there is that you can get too far-fetched. You can decide that

in the year 2300 we're all going to be bio-engineered to the point that we no longer look human, and we're going to have faster-than-light travel because we've got some form of quantum doodad drive. In other words, you can get so completely exotic to the point a contemporary reader can't attach themselves to it. There's very little to grasp onto. There are some writers who I like a great deal who can only be read by hardcore science fiction readers, because unless you've been reading a lot of science fiction there's no way you can possibly understand what they're talking about.

I don't want to do that. I want somebody who's read little to no science fiction to be able to pick up one of my novels and not feel lost within the first five pages.

BRUT: *You've testified before Congress regarding the space program, participated*

in defense think tank seminars. What's the appeal of that kind of specialized interaction?

STEELE: It's never been something I've deliberately sought out. That's the funny thing about it. I haven't advertised myself as being available for congressional testimonies or defense conferences or working on the board of advisors for the Space Frontier Foundation or any of the other strange adventures I've had in my career. They've just kind of happened to me.

Testifying to Congress was because the then-chairman of the House Subcommittee on Space and Aeronautics Dana Rohrabacher wanted a science fiction writer on the panel. Somebody on his staff suggested my name, so they sent me an email and I said, "Sure." Going to participate in a conference on futuristic WMDs in England happened because my name popped up on a short list that included Vernor Vinge, Jerry Pournelle, Wil McCarthy and Orson Scott Card. It wasn't like I approached these guys and begged them. They wanted me to be there so, hey, if you're paying the way, I can go.

The appeal of all this is I'm doing something I've never done before, and I'm seeing a part of the world I've never seen before. It's another unexpected adventure that's sort of fallen my way. But it's never been something I've actively courted. In fact, most of the time I'm a fairly reclusive individual. I can spend nine or ten months without leaving home, and in fact I usually do. Beginning around Labor Day, I hole up in my office and begin working on another book, and I really don't see the light of day again until May or June or so. Then I sort of crawl out and say, "Oh yeah. The world still exists."

It's an interesting thing being a science fiction writer. People believe that you can predict the future. You can't, but you can fake it! [Laughing]

BRUT: *From your vantage point, how do you perceive the politics of space exploration? Standing on the sidelines, it often appears*

everything works at cross purposes. Actual space exploration often takes a back seat to every other consideration.

STEELE: I think one thing is that space exploration is rapidly moving out of the political sphere and into the private sphere. We are no longer in the Apollo era where it's done for the sake of national prestige. Two different things are happening right now. One is that we're seeing the emergence of private-side space exploration as a major player. This is beginning, of course, with the emergence of the space tourism industry with Virgin Galactic getting set to launch the first regular sub-orbital flights. I'm sure that we will soon see others move in as competitors to bring in their own technologies and so forth. That's just the camel's nose in the tent.

The other, more significant thing that's happening is that a new space race is beginning. It's nowhere near as high profile as what happened during the Apollo years when the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. were racing to see who was going to be the first man on the moon. That's been done. This time the competition is going to be between the industrialized countries that have access to space - the U.S., China, India, and very possibly Japan - to send people back to the moon. It's not for the sake of national prestige, although there certainly will be a lot of that for whoever gets the next person to walk on the moon, but for the sake of resources.

During this century, we're going to run out of oil and everybody knows it. Since nobody wants to freeze to death in the dark, we've got to find a way to meet the world's energy demands. This is going to require marshaling a lot of different technologies, some of which, of course, are already on the drawing board, including a new breed of nuclear reactor that's safer than the ones that were built during the 60s and 70s, increased use of renewables such as wind, solar, etc. But the fact remains, you've got a plentiful supply of isotope Helium-3 on the moon that'd be a very efficient fuel

source for commercial fusion power plants if and when they come online. Now nobody's waiting for those power plants to actually get built, although I believe an experimental one is being built in France. They're already moving towards getting their hands on fuel sources on the moon.

That's what's propelling it this time around, and for the most part, it's happening under the radar as far as the public's concerned. Which I'm rather glad for, to tell you the truth. This isn't supposed to be about space heroes and planting the flag, whoever can sell Cheerios or whatever. This is supposed to be about making the human race a permanently space-faring species and perhaps saving the world while we're at it. Politics plays a role in this only so far as NASA continues to have stable funding from one year to the next, but while I admire everything NASA does, they're quickly becoming no longer the major power on this. They've got a lot of competition.

I mean, if NASA closed its doors tomorrow and everybody was fired, if they mothballed every manned and unmanned effort that the space agency does, you would still see people going into space. You would still see people walking on the moon in ten to twenty years, because somebody else will do it.

BRUT: *Do you think the Orion spacecraft is the right direction for NASA to go?*

STEELE: Yes. Since 1980 we've had regular shuttle flights into space with interruptions caused by the Challenger and Columbia disasters. Now, the shuttle flights have done a lot of good work. I mean, they've done everything from put the Hubble space telescope up there and repair it; they've lofted the components of the space station into orbit. Now that the remaining scientific modules are coming online, I think we'll finally see the ISS live up to its full potential instead of being a kind of glorified house trailer in space. There's been a lot of good work done with the shuttle flights, but ultimately that's not

the purpose. Ultimately, the purpose is, as I've said before, establish humankind as a space-faring species. You can't do that with the shuttle. The shuttle was never supposed to be an end to a means; it was supposed to be a means to an end. We're going to have to develop a means of going back to the moon. That's what I said during the Congressional testimony in 2001. While Orion in terms of architecture looks like a step back, because it's close in configuration with the Apollo module.

BRUT: *Buzz Aldrin's advocated for something along those lines since the 70s, I believe.*

STEELE: Yeah, because it gets you there. Period. We should've never left the moon. We should've at least kept something going during that time, but that's water under the bridge. Now that we have a clear impetus and a clear reason for going back to the moon, there's no reason to wait around another ten, fifteen, twenty years until we somehow or other develop a jazzier vehicle to get us back. Let's go with the proven technologies.

BRUT: *What about Lockheed Martin's original proposal for the Crew Excursion Vehicle, the one that incorporated a lifting body design?*

STEELE: That's a possibility, but who knows? That might ultimately be the way to go. You see, one thing that is happening also, which I find interesting, is because you have a number of different companies competing and doing these things - even though they're still looking at NASA as their primary customer - there's increasingly less reason for them to rely *only* on NASA as that principal consumer. It may well be that companies that come up with alternate means of going into space that NASA turned down will look at this and say, "Screw it. Why don't we do this on our own?" I think that may emerge as a possibility in the next couple of decades as it becomes proven that private industry can

do this on its own. We're sort of in a shake-out period right now, where we're going to see what flies and what doesn't as far as private industry goes.

In some ways, the situation we have now with private space exploration is akin to what was happening in the 1920s with the development of the airline industries. New kinds of airplanes were coming online capable of carrying a lot of passengers but with the main form of profit coming from mail delivery. A lot of different proposals out there for getting people from here to there, including giant airliners with ten engines able to carry four hundred passengers at a time to floating barges in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean, and a number of different aircraft designs that looked viable turned out to be total kludges. Eventually that shook out to a handful of companies with tried and true aircraft making a lot of money. I think we're in the same cycle again with the space industry. Not exactly - history never exactly repeats itself - but it's sort of the same thing.

BRUT: *One more question before I have to cut you loose. Tell me about the time you had to shoot a rabid skunk.*

STEELE: How did you hear that story?
[Laughing] Do you *really* want to hear this?

BRUT: *This needs to be recorded for posterity.*

STEELE: A couple years ago, I was awake late one spring evening. I was working on page proofs for one of my books, and I hear this commotion going on outside. I look out and I see my neighbors from next door chasing a skunk around. This rabid skunk had bitten one of their horses. They didn't know it had rabies, they just knew it was a skunk that had bitten their horse, so they were trying to capture it. They were down there with a garbage can and flashlight and baseball bats and whatnot, and they were trying to capture this damn thing.

We managed to corner the skunk before

it got into my house through the dog door, which would've been awful, and then we had to chase him out of my garage where it'd hid underneath my wife's car. We got him into the yard, and we planted a big twenty-gallon plastic garbage can over him to keep him confined while somebody called the animal control office to get out there.

We had to have gotten Massachusetts' only blind animal control officer, because it took four or five tries for this guy to shoot the skunk *at point blank range!* He had a varmint gun he'd loaded with a .22 bullet, and when we lifted away the can he stepped over the skunk that was at his feet. He pointed the gun at the skunk and pulled the trigger. The skunk flops over. We think it's dead. We walk off, and while we're looking at the gun, saying, "This is kinda cool . . . never seen this before," my wife turns around and says, "Guys, the skunk's getting away."

The skunk'd only been winged and was hobbling off across the yard so we went back over there again, got the garbage can, turned it upside down over the skunk again. The animal control officer reloads his gun, we pull away the can, he steps over it, he aims, he fires . . . and the gun jams.

The skunk uncovers his eyes, looks up at us and goes, "Hot damn, I'm still alive" and begins to hightail it for the woods. So the guy goes and reloads his gun again. We chase the skunk back across the yard, put the can back over it again. The animal control officer gives us the nod, we pull away the can. He steps over the skunk with his feet on either side, fires the gun and misses at point blank range!

By this time, everybody - my wife and the neighbor's wife - is looking at each other like, "Is this man blind?" How could he possibly screw up the simple task of shooting a rodent? Once again, we went through the procedure, and it was on the fourth or fifth try that he finally managed to nail the skunk.

I'm not sure how much this has to do with writing, but it does show that on occasion I have an interesting life. Things happen to me. I don't know why.

Nurse with Wound—Steven Stapleton: Thirty Years On

By Holly Day

Nurse With Wound was founded in North London in 1978 by Steven Stapleton, John Fothergill, and Heman Pathank. Their debut album - featuring Stapleton's artwork on the cover - *Chance Meeting on a Dissecting Table of a Sewing Machine and an Umbrella* was released in 1979. Since 1981, only Stapleton remains at the helm of the "group," carrying on its legacy of avant-garde improvisation, dark ambient noise, and industrial-sounding rhythms. Stapleton has released over forty albums under the NWW moniker and has collaborated with dozens of artists including Jim O'Rourke and James Thirwell of Foetus.

In 1989, Stapleton moved from London to Ireland with his wife and frequent collaborator Diana Rogerson - previously of *Whore 156* and *Fistfuck*. Along with their four children, they continued to write and record music while living in relative seclusion in a house Steven built himself. Every six months or so, Stapleton comes out of hiding to release a new album, each completely different from the last. *Huffin' Rag Blues*, his newest work, is a crazy combination of traffic noise and jungle sounds set against a backdrop of exotica and lounge-lizard beats. Stapleton's collaborator for this album is Andrew Liles, best known for his startlingly

primitive experimental drum work with *Faust* and *The Hafler Trio*, just to name a few.

BRUTARIAN: *I know you've been asked this hundreds of times, but where did the name Nurse with Wound come from?*

STEVEN STAPLETON: It was just something we made up, really. It was just - our album was finished for about four months, but we couldn't release it because we couldn't find a name for the band. Well, I'll tell you what happened. We made a list of our favorite words and came up with about sixty. The first one was "nurse" and the second was "wound." We spent hours making permutations of these words we'd come up with, and we couldn't, we just couldn't decide on the band's name. Then John's [Fothergill] mother came in and said, "What are you doing?" And we told her, and she just looked over the top and said, "Nurse with Wound." And we said, "Yes! That's it! Eureka!" And immediately, that was the name. It's true! It really is true.

BRUT: *It always reminds me of those pulp novels from the 40s, the Naughty Nurses' series, where on the cover of the book there's a*

nurse hiding behind the door with a scalpel in her hand getting ready to attack someone.

S: Right, right. It's nice - I like the sinister connotations of the name.

BRUT: *It might not have worked as well if you'd been a boy band.*

S: Well, I don't know. [Laughs] It'd be even more perverted.

BRUT: *So how did you get started in music?*

S: I suppose I spent my childhood listening to music intently. It wasn't until an accidental chance meeting with a studio engineer that I decided to try my hand at making sound. It was a complete accident, just like the album, a chance meeting.

BRUT: *So you probably started off using analog tape and analog technology?*

S: Yeah! And I still do!

BRUT: *So you never made the crossover to digital-only recording?*

S: I have recently, a little. My newest album, *Huffin' Rag Blues* (United Jnana Records) - that was done totally in digital on

the computer. But pretty much everything before that was done with analog tapes and analog outboard equipment. I don't have a computer myself, though. I don't even have email.

BRUT: *That sounds nice.*

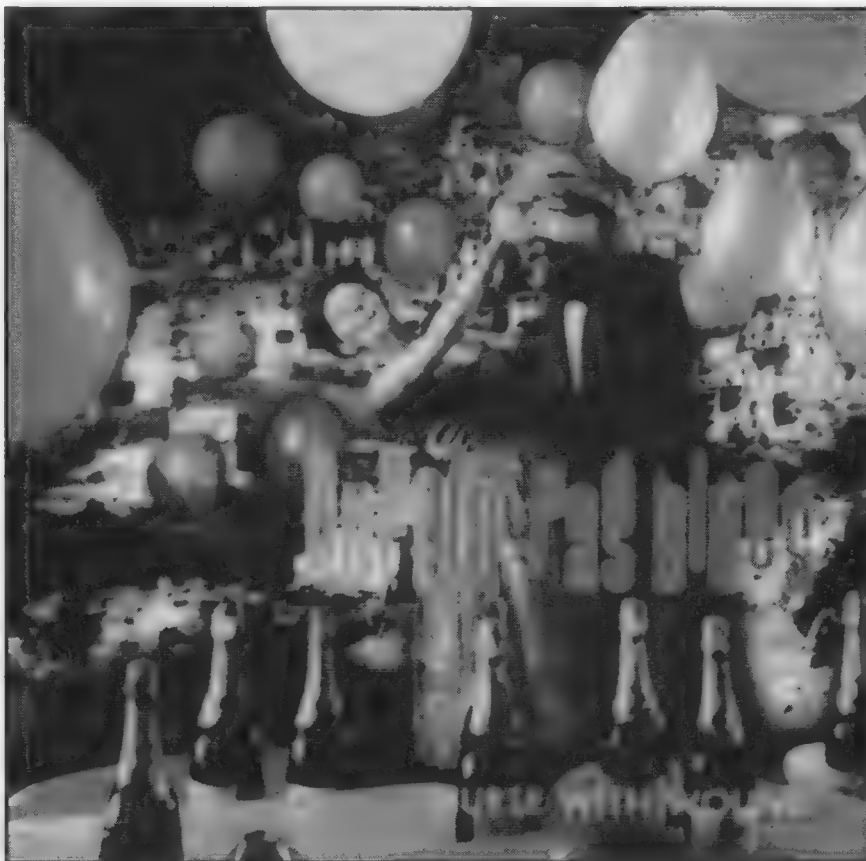
S: [Laughs] I view a computer as just another tool, and the results we got working with it, even though I found it a little

difficult to use at first, were fantastic. Colin Potter, my right-hand man as well, he's been learning this over the last few years. Now his studio is based around rebuilding his equipment from analog to digital. But we still have all the old equipment there.

The new technology is amazing. With my old

equipment, I would literally spend an entire evening editing tape and come away with fifteen seconds of music - this was after a really intense evening of editing. Now, I dare say, you couldn't really do that on a computer. You couldn't get the same kind of effect, but you could do something similar and much, much quicker.

BRUT: *It seems like with splicing tape it was easier to make a mistake, so you had to be much, much more careful during the editing process.*



S: That's true. And some of the mistakes were just astoundingly good. I always follow through on a mistake.

BRUT: *Well, what else can you do in that situation?*

S: Yeah, right.

BRUT: *So is United Jnana Records your own label?*

S: No. It's my label but managed and run by a guy called Mark Logan out in Canada somewhere.

BRUT: *Okay, because you had the work on United Dairy before.*

S: That's right, yeah. Well, he had a little label called Jnana. Before that there was a distribution company that I was with for many years, almost ten, called World Serpent. They went bust, and we - along with their other clients, including Coil - went through a really bad time when we lost a lot of our master tapes. Because the company had gone bust, we weren't getting paid nor had we product available. So it was a really bad time for us. And then Mark Logan of Jnana Records stepped in and kind of rescued us from bankruptcy. Almost.

BRUT: *So you must have a close relationship with the label, then?*

S: Yeah. He's a fabulous man.

BRUT: *So to you, what is this new record about? Is there a theme or an idea that ties it together?*

S: Just that it was recorded by Andrew Liles and myself. When we met, the day we met, we both realized that we have one thing in common and that was a great love of easy-listening band music. And that day, we decided to make an album. And it took

pretty much four years for us to make it. But it's the result of just tinkering away every now and then and just fulfilling our fantasies of making our own lounge album, really.

BRUT: *Andrew Liles' records are heavy percussion; they don't sound much like lounge music and neither does any of your previous work.*

S: Well, that's not exactly true. There's a lot of stuff in my back catalog that's loungey. I did a mini album called *Call Out the Moon*, which is almost identical to *Huffin' Rag Blues*. There's another album I did called *The Sylvie and Babs Hi-Fi Companion*, and that was kind of based on easy-listening music, too. So it's always been with me. It might sound radically different on the first listen, but if you know the history of what I've been doing, then it's no surprise, really.

BRUT: *Who is your favorite exotica act? Are you a Martin Denny fan?*

S: Oh, sure. I like all that stuff. Esquivel, Paris Prada - I love these - there was just so much of it in the late 50s, early 60s. There were hundreds, literally hundreds of orchestras, and I dare say I probably liked them all.

BRUT: *My husband is a huge lounge/exotica fan. Every time we go by a yard sale, he's got to dig through some old lady's record collection. We have the biggest collection of Yma Sumac on vinyl than anyone I know.*

S: Oh, she's wonderful.

BRUT: *I missed seeing her very last tour, back about twenty years ago, and I've been kicking myself ever since.*

S: Oh, so you're into the lounge music too?

BRUT: *Oh yeah!*

S: What do you think of the record?

BRUT: *I love it. We listened to it about three times just today while driving around doing our shopping. My daughter just loves the track with all the jungle sounds. She's four. She kept asking to hear "the monkey song" again.*

S: That album's got to be pretty dangerous for driving, especially the "Cruising for a Bruising" track with the car crashes.

BRUT: *Yes, and that came on right when really torrential rains started coming down, too. We had to turn the volume down so we could hear the real people honking on the road around us. Why do you use so many organic instruments on the record instead of just samples?*

S: Well, there are samples on there, too. I don't know. We use real instruments, and we use samples. We didn't make a conscious decision just to do live acoustic instruments, although there are quite a few on there. We just use anything at hand, really, to create the effect we wanted. For many, many years, I merely used synthesizers. I actually think that on the album before this I used one synthesizer for the first time ever, but generally, I don't like synthetic things, synthetic sounds. I prefer real sounds manipulated by analog-effects boxes.

BRUT: *When you're in the studio, do you play together as a group to record, or do you lay the tracks down individually?*

S: On this new album it was all done individually and put together piecemeal. But in the past, yeah, we've had live bands set up in the studio. I try to record in a different way every single time to make it fresh. I'm really, really happy when machines break down because it means we can't use them anymore, and we have to find something else to work with. When that happens, it makes

you go off on a different route, really. So, yes, to keep it fresh and interesting I always try different things.

BRUT: *You live in County Claire, Ireland, which is renowned for its wildlife and history. How do you think living in a place surrounded by nature, as opposed to being in a city, has affected your music?*

S: I don't think my music has been affected at all. I kind of live in a bubble out here. My house is in the middle of a national park in the mountain range here. I'm not a great fan of Irish music, and there's loads of it in the local bars, so I don't go out much. I think my vision is unaffected by my life in Ireland.

I'll tell you one thing, though. Every time I get up and go outside my front door, I know I'm privileged to live here. I dare say everything has some kind of affect, but I'm not aware of it consciously. Also, because it's really hard to be objective about your own material, it's hard to see the effect my surroundings have had on my own. But maybe there's someone out there, listening to my entire output over these past thirty years or so, that can see a distinct change from the time I moved to Ireland. I'd be very interested to talk to that person about it.

Nurse With Wound Discography

1979 *Chance Meeting on a Dissecting Table of a Sewing Machine and an Umbrella*

1980 *To the Quiet Men from a Tiny Girl*
Merzbild Schwet

1981 *Insect and Individual Silenced*
The 150 Murderous Passions (with Whitehouse)

1982 *Homotopy to Marie*

1984 *Brained By Falling Masonry*



1986 *Spiral Insana*

1988 *Alas the Madonna Does Not Function*
Soliloquy For Lilith

The Sylvie And Babs Hi-Fi Companion

1992 *Thunder Perfect Mind*
 1993 *Crumb Duck (with Stereolab)*
 1994 *Rock 'n Roll Station*
 1996 *Who Can I Turn To Stereo*
 1997 *Acts Of Senseless Beauty (with Aranos)*
Simple Headphone Mind (with Stereolab)
 1999 *An Awkward Pause*
The Swinging Reflective
 2000 *Alice The Goon*
 2001 *Funeral Music For Perez Prado*
 2002 *Man With The Woman Face*
 2003 *Salt Marie Celeste*
She And Me Fall Together In Free Death
The Musty Odour Of Pierced Rectums

2003 *Chance Meeting Of A Defective Tape*
Machine And A Migraine
 2004 *Angry Eelectric Finger*
Shipwreck Radio Volume One
 2005 *Echo Poeme Sequence No. 2*
Shipwreck Radio Volume Two
 2006 *Soundpooling*
Stereo Wastelands
Rat Tapes One
Shipwreck Radio: The Final Broadcasts
 2007 *Disconnected (with Faust)*
 2008 *The Iron Soul of Nothing*
The Bacteria Magnet
Huffin' Rag Blues

LITTLE CREATURES

by Michael McCarty, Bram Stoker Award Finalist

Michael McCarty's third short-story collection features 25 short stories that range from scary to funny from twisted science-fiction to frightening fantasy. You'll find space-rats, tons of cats, Satan, rusty robots, possessed house pets, zombies, vampires, giant gators, ghosts, trolls and more surprises. With an Introduction by William F. Nolan and Afterword by P.D. Cacek. Released by Sam's Dot Publishing: www.genremall.com/anthologiesr.htm#littlecreatures

www.myspace.com/monsterbook

Fred Olen Ray:

One- Man Movie Industry

By Michael McCarty
and
Mark McLaughlin



The movie titles instantly grab your attention: Attack Of The 60-Foot Centerfold, Scream Queen Hot Tub Party, Dinosaur Girls, Hollywood Chainsaw Hookers, and more. You know these movies probably haven't won any Oscars, but even so, they have their place in the hearts of their fans. These are cult classics – campy, vampy, and beloved by art-house/drive-in/late-night-cable watchers and adventurous DVD renters everywhere.

Those titles and more are the brainchildren of Fred Olen Ray, who is

practically a one-man movie industry. Over the past thirty-plus years, this prolific producer, director, and screenwriter has made more than one hundred films, and is showing no signs of slowing down.

Born September 10, 1954, in Ohio, Fred grew up in Florida where he worked with film legend Buster Crabbe on the movie Alien Dead. Fred later moved to Southern California to be closer to the beating heart of America's film industry. He has worked in the genres of horror, science fiction, action-adventure, crime, soft-core erotica, and has

also made family features.

Over the years, Fred has used a variety of pseudonyms, including Bill Carson, S. Carver, Roger Collins, Peter Daniels, Nick or Nicholas Medina, Sam Newfield, Ed Raymond, Sherman Scott, and Peter Stewart. A man of many talents, he has even tried his hand at professional wrestling grappling under the name of Fabulous Freddie Valentine.

His early movies – often low on budget but high on energy – appeared at drive-in theaters and grindhouse venues. Many of his current efforts have been released straight to DVD or to such cable TV channels such as Cinemax, HBO, and Showtime. Some of his films are released directly to DVD by Retromedia, his own film production and distribution company.

Recently, Fred took a break from his busy schedule to answer some questions about his life and work.

BRUTARIAN: Tell us about your upbringing. What inspired you to follow a career in films?

FRED OLEN RAY: Like a lot of kids, I was influenced by *Famous Monsters* magazine and its articles about how other kids were making their own movies using their parents' 8mm cameras. I grew up mostly in Florida, in a middle-class family.

BRUT: What was the first movie you remember seeing?

FRED: My earliest memories are *The Alamo* and *Master Of The World*, about 1960, I'd imagine.

BRUT: How did you get into the movie industry?



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FRED: I started out in TV/Radio in Orlando, and I made some very bad low-budget features on the weekends while working at the station. I eventually got stale at the station and decided to give California a shot.

BRUT: *Tell us about your current projects.*

FRED: I have several shows out and about right now, but the most current is *Dire Wolf*, a prehistoric monster flick with Maxwell Caulfield. It just came out of post-production today. I'm also prepping the third season of *The Lair* for here! TV.

BRUT: *One of your early movies, Alien Dead, was made for \$12,000 - of which \$2,000 went to guest star Buster Crabbe. How did you get Buster Crabbe to come out of retirement for only two grand?*

FRED: I was a cameraman for *The Golden Age Olympics*, for which he was the Grand Marshall, and I approached him there. He had friends in the Orlando area, so he was keen to come back on someone else's dime . . . and I do mean dime!

BRUT: *In Alien Dead there is the line, "She's deader than Mother's Day in an orphanage." Did you write that or was that Martin Allen Nicholas?*

FRED: That was actually a gag tossed in by the actor Dennis Underwood who was a funny guy.

BRUT: *You met Edward D. Wood, Jr. before he passed away. What was Ed Wood like?*

FRED: Ed was a very gregarious, outgoing guy. He was very excited that anyone remembered him or would want to hire him to write. It's a real shame he didn't live long enough to enjoy the fame he would later receive.

BRUT: *Why was Hollywood Chainsaw*

Hookers called Hollywood Hookers in England? Did they object to chainsaws more than hookers?

FRED: The UK had a thing about the word "Chainsaw"; they forbid it. I used to say they were all down with hookers because that's what they had the most of . . . but I was just kidding, of course.

BRUT: *In 2008, you did a 20th anniversary edition of Hollywood Chainsaw Hookers. Why do you think the film has held up to the test of time?*

FRED: I think it's an honest exploitation film. Definitely a product of its time with a certain awareness of what came before it.

BRUT: *Hollywood Chainsaw Hookers and some of your other movies were featured in Playboy magazine during the 80s. How did it feel to have your films featured next to Playboy bunnies?*

FRED: Any PR is good PR . . . better than being hyped in *Nugget*. *Playboy* was the top of the line as was one of the highest-paying mags for writers.

BRUT: *Should directors have the previous experience of being an actor?*

FRED: Probably not . . . actors can be very funky people. I've always likened running a set to running a day care center. Directing and acting are two VERY different jobs.

BRUT: *Do you think the old black-and-white horror films will be lost to future generations raised on CGI effects? It's sad to think of Lugosi's Dracula, for example, fading into obscurity.*

FRED: I know my kids have always steered clear of anything not in color, but I'm sure a resurgence will happen, like with Bogart and Dean. The old films will continue to

entertain a certain group.

BRUT: *Who is the biggest star you've ever featured in a production? Who was the most memorable star you've ever featured - meaning, one who made the experience of working with them, for whatever reason, impossible to forget?*

FRED: For good, bad, and ho-hum I would say Lee Van Cleef, Telly Savalas, John Carradine, Cliff Robertson, Morgan Fairchild, Udo Kier, Tom Berenger, and maybe Tanya Roberts.

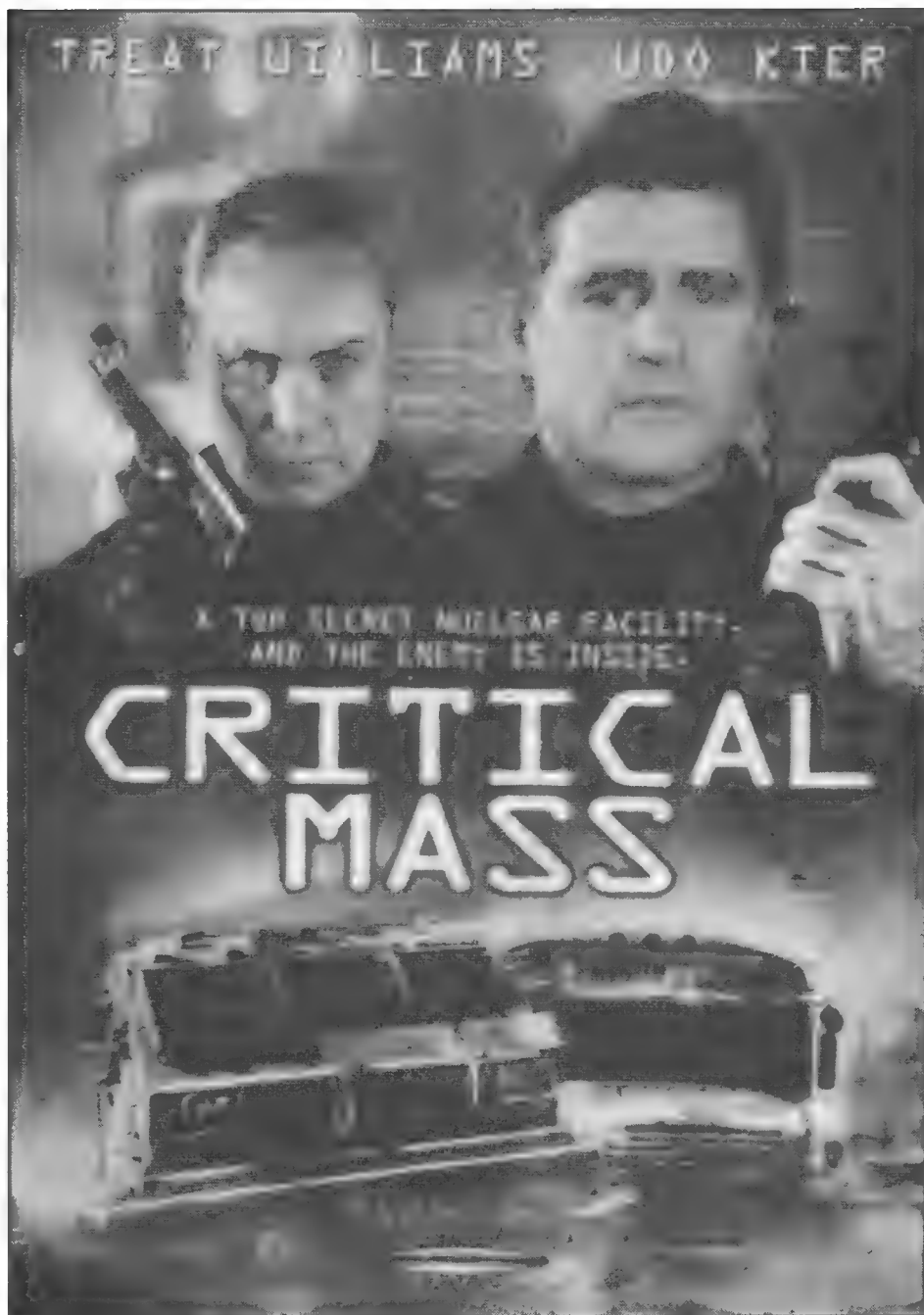
BRUT: *Does the casting couch still exist in Hollywood today? If so, does this happen with big-budget movies or indie movies?*

FRED: I couldn't tell you. I've never seen such a thing, but I do know that some directors try to find their next date amongst cast members. But I'm not naming names.

BRUT: *Besides budget and distribution, what are the other major challenges for indie filmmakers?*

FRED: Getting the money raised, and getting the money back, are the toughest things. There is no good market right now for small films. Almost everyone is losing their shirt.

BRUT: *Which of your movies would you consider to be your personal best?*



FRED: The Shooter.

BRUT: *Are vampire movies the cheapest of all horror films to make (with the possible exception of invisible-man movies)?*

FRED: Invisibility films are actually tough, because there are so many effects shots in them. I'd say vampires are even cheaper than zombies, but zombies come close.

BRUT: *You've made some movies with some*

pretty wild monsters in them. Which one was your favorite?

FRED: Probably the creature in *Deep Space*, it was big and rolled around on a track. I wish that would come out on DVD!

BRUT: *If you could remake any classic movie, no expense spared, which one would it be? And what would you change in your version?*

FRED: I'm not a fan of remaking classic films. I wouldn't mind making *Halloween 8*, but I wouldn't want to tackle a remake of Carpenter's original.

BRUT: *Peers: Roger Corman, George Romero, John Waters. Who, if any, do you admire and why? Is there one you'd like to work with someday?*

FRED: Always looked up to Roger Corman, the perfect blend of business and art. I've liked John Waters' stuff. I would like to direct Christopher Lee in something, but that probably won't happen.

BRUT: *You worked with a number of scream queens over the years. Who do you think were the sexiest? Did any of the girls complain about the nudity?*

FRED: My vote always goes to Michelle Bauer for sexiest and funniest. Not too much complaining. I'm a pretty even-tempered guy and never push people very hard during

the shoot. I like to hit it and quit it.

BRUT: *What's on the horizon for Fred Olen Ray?*

FRED: We're still running Retromedia DVD, and I'm still directing and producing at a higher level than ever. I might be the luckiest guy working today. Last year I made four features and produced a mini-series in Hawaii!

BRUT: *Any last words?*



FRED: Yeah, I've said it before, but people always ask me what I'd really like to be doing, and I tell them in all honesty I have everything I want in life. I have a beautiful, loving wife, great children, a dog, a big house, and a nice car. Short of winning the lottery that just about covers it for me. Thanks.

THE MOVIES AND TV PROGRAMS OF FRED OLEN RAY

The Lair (2007) (TV)
The Legend of William Tell (2006)
Glass Trap (2005)
Bikini a Go Go (2004) (as Nicholas Medina) aka *Curse of the Erotic Tiki*
The Bikini Escort Company (2004) (as Nicholas Medina) aka *The Erotic Escort Company*
Genie in a String Bikini (2004) (as Nicholas Medina)
Haunting Desires (2004) (TV) (as Nicholas Medina)
Teenage Cavegirl (2004) (as Nicholas Medina)
Bikini Airways (2003) (as Nicholas Medina)
Final Examination (2003)
Southern Discomfort: Wrestling on the Indie Circuit (2002)
Venomous (2002) (as Ed Raymond)
13 Erotic Ghosts (2002) (as Nicholas Medina)
Emmanuelle 2000 (2001)
Air Rage (2001)
Mach 2 (2001)
ACW Wrestling's Wildest Matches! (2001) (as Sherman Scott)
Emmanuelle 2001: Emmanuelle's Sensual Pleasures (2001) (as Nicholas Medina)
Kept (2001) (uncredited) aka *Playback*
Stranded (2001) aka *Black Horizon; On Eagle's Wings; Space Station*
Submerged (2000)
Sideshow (2000)
Critical Mass (2000) (as Ed Raymond)
Inviati Speciali (2000)
Invisible Mom II (1999)
Fugitive Mind (1999)

The Prophet (1999) aka *The Capitol Conspiracy*
The Kid with X-ray Eyes (1999) (as Sherman Scott)
Counter Measures (1999) aka *Crash Dive 2*
Active Stealth (1999)
Scandal: On the Other Side (1999) (as Nick Medina)
Mom, Can I Keep Her? (1998)
Inferno (1998) aka *Operation Cobra*
Illicit Dreams 2 (1998) (as Roger Collins) aka *Death & Desire*
Billy Frankenstein (1998)
Dear Santa (1998) (as Peter Stewart) aka *Secret Santa*
Mom's Outta Sight (1998) (as Peter Stewart)
The Shooter (1997) (as Ed Raymond) aka *Desert Shooter*
Invisible Mom (1997)
Bikini Hoe-Down (1997) (as Roger Collins)
Hybrid (1997)
Invisible Dad (1997)
Little Miss Magic (1997)
Kidwitch (USA: video title)
Masseuse 2 (1997) (as Peter Daniels) aka *Black Stocking Diary*
Maximum Revenge (1997) aka *Maximum Security*
Night Shade (1997) (as Nicholas Medina)
Rapid Assault (1997) (as Sherman Scott)
Friend of the Family II (1996) (as Nicholas Medina), aka *Hell Hath No Fury; Innocence Betrayed; Passionate Revenge*
Fugitive Rage (1996) aka *Caged Fear*
Over the Wire (1996) (as Nicholas Medina)
Masseuse (1996) (as Peter Daniels), aka *American Masseuse*
Droid Gunner (1995) aka *Phoenix 2*
Bikini Drive-In (1995)
Attack of the 60-Foot Centerfold (1995)
Star Hunter (1995) (as Sam Newfield)
Inner Sanctum II (1994) aka *Inner Sanctum 2*
Possessed by the Night (1994)
Dinosaur Island (1994)
Mind Twister (1994)
Dinosaur Girls (1993)
Witch Academy (1993) aka *Little Devils*

Evil Toons (1992)
Haunting Fear (1991)
Spirits (1991)
Inner Sanctum (1991)
Bad Girls from Mars (1991)
Scream Queen Hot Tub Party (1991) (as Bill Carson) aka Hollywood Scream Queen Hot Tub Party
Wizards of the Demon Sword (1991)
Mob Boss (1990)
Demon Cop (1990)
Warlords (1989)
Terminal Force (1989)
Alienator (1989)
Hollywood Chainsaw Hookers (1988) aka Hollywood Hookers
Prison Ship (1988) aka Adventures of Taura; Prison Ship Star Slammer; Star Slammer; Starslammer; Starslammer: The Escape

Beverly Hills Vamp (1988)
Commando Squad (1987)
Cyclone (1987)
Deep Space (1987)
Evil Spawn (1987) aka Alien Within; Alive by Night; Deadly Sting; Metamorphosis
Armed Response (1986) aka Jade Jungle
The Tomb (1986)
The Phantom Empire (1986)
Biohazard (1985)
Scalps (1983)
Alien Dead (1980) aka It Fell from the Sky; Swamp of the Blood Leeches; The Alien Dead
The Brain Leeches (1977)
Honey Britches (1971) aka Death Farm; Demented Death Farm Massacre: The Movie; Hillbilly Hooker; Moonshiners' Women

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Something There Is That Loves Rock And Roll

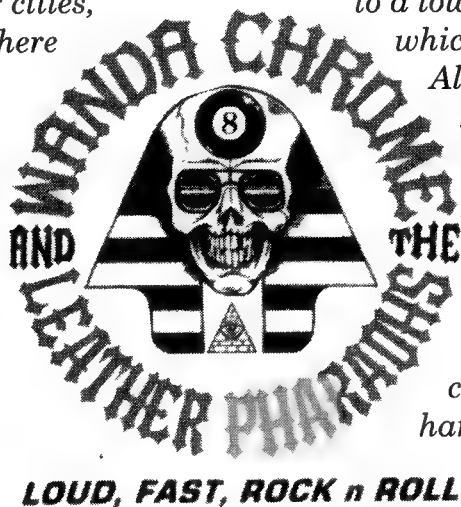
By Dom Salemi

We went looking for that quintessential rock-and-roll band and couldn't find them anywhere.

Look to the smaller cities, the toilers told us. The ones where men work long hours for little money. Where the winters are cold and seemingly never ending. When the young, with little prospects in front of them, celebrate the nothingness of their existence in nondescript taverns in which the beer is cheap, the smoke is thick, and the music so loud, you have to leave the place to hear yourself think. Search in such a place, and

you will find that band, the mill workers said. And, lo, after many a mile and much travail, we descended from vertiginous bluffs to a town situated amongst three rivers which men there did call Milwaukee.

Also named Pleasant Land, it was home of the Cheesehead and the much celebrated Pabst Blue Ribbon, and much else that was surpassing strange. And it was there, in that place, midst many louche venues, that we found Wanda and her Pharaohs costumed in leather rocking most hard and most righteously. Doing so regardless of the acclaim, or size of the crowds, or monies promised. And they leavened



their rock with punk, and blues, and other joyful noises. And we saw, and we heard, and it was good.

BRUTARIAN: *A curious name for the band, especially one plying its trade in a blue-collar town like Milwaukee. Odd, too, that the fictional front woman is neither the lead singer nor the lead guitarist. For the record, you, Wanda Chrome, are the band's bass player and back-up vocalist.*

WANDA CHROME: Ah, my dear, you have never been to a show. Now I don't put tape on my tits or show you my private bits, but I try to make my presence known and show the females out there that you can rock like the boys and keep your clothes on. As for the name, Cliff came up with The Leather

Pharaohs. I misspoke and said there were no female pharaohs - there were - so then he came up with "Wanda Chrome." At the time there were a few "Mona Lisa Overdrives" and a couple of "True Heart Susies," so we knew we'd be the only one with this name.

BRUT: *I think it was Ian Hunter who once said, "Rock 'n' roll's a loser's game, it mesmerizes but I can't explain." Your band has been around a long time, some fifteen years, and the big payoff has yet to occur. So what*

is it that keeps you going?

WANDA CHROME: From the get-go with this band, it never was about achieving some kind of fame or cult status. We just wanted to rock, as stupid as that sounds. Just go to other cities and play shows. That was it. As for the "pay off," that is in the eye of the beholder. We traveled up and down and all around Europe seven times. We have the most fantastic memories of places and people

and have cultivated close friendships; that's hard to top for me. I must also say that part of this band's longevity is its closeness. We are an extremely tight-knit unit.

BRUT: *Milwaukee's a big beer town. Why haven't they produced a scene like Detroit's? Or on a smaller scale, perhaps, like Austin's? Or have they?*



WANDA CHROME: Oh boy! Ask me to bad mouth the city I live in. In some respects, Milwaukee can be "big city" and have nice clubs and entertainment; but then again, it can be "small town" where someone would rather save that five dollars. That is, they would simply rather spend the cover charge for two PBRs someplace else.

BRUT: *So that's why you annointed yourselves "Milwaukee's hardest rocking band"? As a method of self-promotion or as kind of*

an inside joke?

WANDA CHROME: In a way, yes, because for awhile, we were. When people were having that holiday dinner or watching the big game, we were driving back from some show in Detroit or Dayton, etc. We would go anywhere in a five hundred-mile radius as long as it was on a weekend.

BRUT: *You intimated in an e-mail to me that your last full length More so disappointed you and the band that it lead to depression and the temporary suspension of the group. It sounded fine to me: great covers of The Stooges and Radio Birdman; inventive and arresting originals; searing, blistering guitar work. I'm sure you and the boys know best, and it's obviously a fine line in your ears between success and failure, so what gives? Why was the disc a failure for the group, and how do you deal with that knowing that each release is crucial both for the artistic evolution of the band and its economic future?*

WANDA CHROME: I must clarify. *More* didn't lead to the suspension; life did. Babies came - not me, thank you very much! - and work came - we have our own silk screening business - so we decided to take a break and tend to things. After the first of the year, we resume. You have to understand that after doing this for years and having to skip things and put stuff on the back burner, we decided to live life outside the band a little. Joel became a daddy with another on the way, and Cliff will be a master diver after this September. As for the CD itself, I'm not unhappy with it. It's just that Wanda Chrome is best live. Without trying to sound cosmic and shit, there is an energy exchange that goes on at a live show, and I think that can be felt on the recording. This was not live, and I think we were out of our comfort zone.

BRUT: *As these bands are obvious influences, give us, in three thousand words or less the reason these discs work for you: Funhouse; Radios Appear; Ramone's first as op-*

posed to End of the Century, which we love but everyone seems to hate.

CLIFF: [lead guitarist and songwriter] For chronological reasons, I'll take these in reverse order.

In 1976 I was living in the cultural vacuum that was the northwest side of Milwaukee, playing in a three-set-per-night bar band called Nightrider doing various hard-rock covers, lots of Stones, and a couple of Bowie and Lou Reed songs. Our keyboard player Art - the hip Eastsider among us - said we should go to Summerfest and see the Ramones. At this point in time, I had heard about punk rock and knew the Ramones were a punk band, but that was it. I had never heard the Ramones or even seen a picture of them. I remember checking out the gear on the stage before the show started (SVT, Marshall, Marshall, drums, SVT, SVT, Marshall) and thinking to myself, "I hope this isn't some stupid, Skynard-type, three-guitar band." Then these four, bad-ass-lookin' guys come out in tight jeans, leather jackets, and sneakers. With no fuckin' around at all, the guitarist hits a power chord, the singer yells, "Hey! We're the Ramones. This one's called 'Blitzkreig Bop!'" The bass player then yells, "1-2-3-4," and they blast into it! Then song after song, separated by only "1-2-3-4" for about half an hour. Then a break and then the same set in reverse order. It was the loudest, fastest, most ass-kickin' thing I had ever seen. Also, I had never seen any band polarize a crowd like that. By the end of the first set, half the audience was gone, while the other half were manic and couldn't get enough. It was without a doubt the most influential event in my musical life. The next day, I went out and bought a black leather jacket, and the Ramones' first album, and played it relentlessly for days.

Shortly after this, I was at a record store looking through the cut-outs and found an album called *Radios Appear* by a group I

had never heard of called Radio Birdman. I thought, "They kinda look like the Ramones, so for forty-nine cents, why not?" I hit the punk jackpot again and now had two albums to play relentlessly.

So, influenced by Johnny Ramones' down-stroke power chords, Deniz Tek's amphetamine-Chuck-Berry licks, and the fact that these guys looked really fuckin' cool, I soon was turning my amp up louder, playing faster, and wearing my guitar as low as the strap would go. At the same time, I found some straight-leg jeans, cut the sleeves off all my t-shirts, and shaved off my mustache. This, of course, led to "creative differences" in the band and I got kicked out.

I put an ad in the paper looking for guys to form a "high-power rock-and-roll" band - I thought if I said "punk" no one would call - and quickly found some other punk rock converts and started a band called The Giggolos doing punk and glam covers and some originals. Mick, the bass player, was a huge N.Y. Dolls' fan and turned me on to them; I would be remiss here to not acknowledge the influence that the Dolls, and in particular, Johnny Thunders, had on me. Dale, the other guitarist, turned me on to another band called The Stooges. Ah! The proverbial light bulb comes on! Now I see where the Ramones and Birdman come from.

Funhouse, their second LP, in my opinion, is the ultimate Stooges' album. I love the minimalist/primitive qualities of their first, but I think *Funhouse* really captured the band at their zenith with the over-the-top-fuck-you! attitude and the musical bombast of songs like "Down on the Street," "TV Eye," and, of course, "Loose." At this point, I also have to give a nod to the first MC5 album *Kick Out The Jams*, recorded live, for exactly the same reasons.

BRUT: *You've played Europe a number of times, yes? American bands always tell me Europeans are more respectful and apprecia-*

tive - is this true? If so, why not junk Wisconsin and move to Paris or Copenhagen and get the love you deserve?

WANDA CHROME: Oh, boy! I am sooooo glad you asked that question. First, let me say again, we toured Europe seven times. The shortest was three weeks and the longest was two months. I have played in nasty squat clubs and big-ass pro clubs, and no matter where they take care of you. There's always food and drink waiting for you, and you are treated with respect. One time we played a show in Thiers, France. Before we could unload, we had to come in and drink a glass of the new spring wine - damn good wine! - after we unloaded. Then we had sandwiches and anything else we wanted; we just needed to tell "the girl." Cliff had a cable problem, and the sound man gave him an excellent cable he made. Still works. All during the night, the owner was cooking us "peasant dinner," so that at the end of the night we had ham and potatoes, cabbage, bread, and more wine. The next morning he came with breakfast - we stayed in the flat upstairs from the club - and we each got a hand-made duk-duk knife. The town is known for it's cutlery. I could tell you so many stories of kindness, but we don't need to make this a double issue. The point I'd like to make is to American club owners. Buying a \$9.99, two-for-one pizza ain't gonna break the bank, Jack. These folks spend hours in a van coming to your "establishment" to put on a show. The least you can do is buy them a crummy pizza. And maybe get up off a case of beer. I'm not even going to approach paying for the hotel room!

BRUT: *Do you think the garage rock revival and general awakened interest in bluesy-hard rock would work to The Leather Pharaohs' advantage should you start actively touring again?*

WANDA CHROME: I imagine it would. We kind of fit in there somewhere, but I'd have to think awfully long and hard about touring

again. It's not for the meek at heart. For as many wonderful stories as I could tell you, there are a few O.M.G. stories as well.

BRUT: *You've been on hiatus for a few years, yes? How do you plan to go about putting it all back together - making connections, getting bookings, generating interest? It just seems that a hard-working DIY band like WCLP has probably spent years getting all the parts to fit, and so it must be terribly difficult trying to reassemble this huge jigsaw puzzle at a moment's notice.*

WANDA CHROME: This, we're not too worried about. When the time comes and we're damn good and ready, we have invitations and opportunities waiting. We've stayed in contact with a lot of people over the years, so there are many "open doors."

BRUT: *Do you do the networking thing a bit differently in today's computer-saturated climate? That is, do you work MySpace, and how does one work MySpace? Do you let listeners download the new material for a pitance? Do you start a blog and use it to get the band's sensibility across as you did earlier with your zine? Just what the hell do you*

do in 2008?

WANDA CHROME: When we started, we weren't even online. I had a crappy, piece-of-shit PC that was only good for creating documents. We had a web site for a while, but once MySpace came along we ditched that. Why buy the cow . . . ? I think MySpace is a good tool for promotion. You have your choice on our page. You can either download for free or buy songs. The buying part was

Beer City Mike's idea. If it was up to me, I'd give it all away. I have this overtly humble "Sally Field" way of thinking, "You really like this? Ok, here, have a CD." I also just started writing some tour stories. Mostly in an effort to keep myself sane during winter - it gets pretty rough here

- but also to shed some light on what touring can really be like. You can find them on our MySpace blog.

BRUT: *And just how do you keep it new after the long hiatus?*

WANDA CHROME: I think it's like hibernation or a long nap. You wake up and feel energized. We've been apart for a while now,



and we're looking forward to getting together again and making noise. Also, not by design, we tend to be a somewhat "social-statement" band, and there has been enough going on in the world to get us interested in starting up again.

BRUT: *Really, isn't the reason WCLP have yet to throw in the towel is the reality that this is a part, an important part, of who you are? In other words, WCLP is not just a business venture, is it? My parents often ask me, why, given the fact that my magazine and record company are unprofitable, I don't just quit and buy a vacation home? That seems a ridiculous question to me, as writing, publishing, scouting new music talent, etc., is as much a part of me as my arms and legs. "I stop doing this and then what?" is always my answer.*

WANDA CHROME: Ha! Parents always ask that question. Cliff's father wants to know the same thing. It was never about the money. Although we've lost enough that we could write it all off on our taxes, so I guess it's profitable in a way. It was more about the traveling, and doing shows, and having adventures and that, we did. When I first met Cliff, he told me he was a painter. He didn't want to tell me he was a musician because he thought I would just kick him to the curb - we all know what kind of moochy slackers musicians are - but the opposite was true. Many times girls will fall in love with the singer, guitarist, etc., but once they do they make the guys quit for fear of "groupies." I always felt that the music playing part was an integral part of him, just like his arm, his leg, his soul, and so who was I to say he must quit? It made me love him more that he had this talent.

BRUT: *Is it better to be a DIY, that is, is it more rewarding booking yourselves, hauling the equipment, selling the merch at the shows, than it would be if a management team were handling the logistics? Do you think it would be better for the band, any*

band, in terms of creativity, to not have to deal with the nuts and bolts of touring and playing?

WANDA CHROME: Yes and no. We probably would have made more money with some kind of management, but then you have that extra "input" and "output" for that matter. We actually started hiring roadies to schlep for us; and I like selling my own merch, you get to talk to more people that way.

BRUT: *Bands with whom I've spoken over the years have often complained about being on a major label. They feel added pressure because they are very conscious of being an investment for the record company and that knowledge often inhibits their creativity. Has it helped WCLP being an independent? Is there more artistic freedom in being an independent?*

WANDA CHROME: Hell, yes! It's altogether possible that being on a major label would have helped, but we didn't want any part of that. We are very protective of ourselves and didn't want some tie-jerk schmuck telling us what to do, play, wear, etc. From time to time, we would be referred to as a "bar band" like it was some kind of dirty thing, but quite frankly we like that scene. You are right there, up close and personal with your audience. You feel that energy flow; and when you're done, you can go out and talk with them, drink with them, hell, maybe even meet their family.

BRUT: *Do you see the whole process, the writing, the studio time, then the promotion, the booking, and the development of the show's presentation, as part and parcel of the band's art? What I'm trying to get at here, in my own fumbling, inarticulate way, is to ask: Is the whole package, whatever you think the package may be, part of the entire presentation, part of the entire aesthetics tied inextricably with the music?*

WANDA CHROME: Boy, that's a heady

one. Yes, I think that it is “a whole package.” You try to convey yourself with your music, but there’s more to it than that. I think people like some kind of visual as well and to feel like the band is really enjoying themselves and not just posing. One of the reasons Wanda never wears high heels. I want to be free to stomp and strut without worrying about falling on my ass. Very basically, WCLP is a hard-rockin’, feel-good kind of band. We want to get you all jacked-up on our music, hit you over the head with it, and in the end, make you feel like you got your money’s worth.

WANDA CHROME AND THE LEATHER PHARAOHS DISCOGRAPHY

(All songs original unless otherwise noted)

CASSINGLE (January 1993) – Self release,
100 copies

Kick Out the Jams (MC5) – Live at “The Unicorn”

You’re Gonna Miss Me (Erickson) – Live at “T.A. Verns”

(Audience recording on reel-to-reel by Dale Kaminski)

SINGLE (1993) - Splunge Records recorded at Walls Have Ears Studios.

Werewolf

Jet Black

SPLUNGE RECORDS COMP CD (1994) -
Ground Up (Recorded at Walls Have Ears Studios)

Johnny’s Got A Gun

When You Lose

BIZARRE FANZINE (France) **COMP CD**
(1994)

When You Lose (Same as on Ground Up)

ELEVEN THE HARD WAY LP/CD (1995)–
Splunge (LP)/ Subway/Germany(CD)
(Recorded live at “Quarters R&R Palace” by
360 Productions mobile unit)

Teenage Head (Loney/Jordon)

When You Lose

Lyin’ To Me

Jet Black

Slow Death (Loney/Jordon)

Prisoners

Doll

Pig

*Bo Diddley (Original composition
incorporating parts of Who Do You Love
(McDaniels), Not Fade Away (Holly), and
1969 (Stooges))*

Kick Out The Jams (MC5)

OX FANZINE (Germany) **COMP** (1996)

Lyin’ To Me (From Eleven The Hard Way)

SINGLE (1996) – Beer City Records

*Faster And Louder (shernof) – Sound Sound
Studios.*

Wanna Be Your Dog (Stooges) – Live at “The Unicorn” with guest vocalist Beautiful Bert. Audience recording on cassette by Dave Johnson.

TRASH ON DEMAND COMP CD (1997)
– Produced by Jeff Dahl at Ultra Under
Records

Private Monkeys – Recorded at “House of Wanda “ by 360 mobile unit

HARTBEAT MAGAZINE (Germany) **EP**
(1997) - Given away as a Freebie **EP**

*Brains In A Jar (McCuen) - Recorded at
H.O.W. by 360 mobile unit*

DICTATORS FOREVER (Spain) **COMP CD** (1997) (Spain) - Dictators’ tribute on
Roto Records

*Fired up (shernof) - Recorded at H.O.W. by
360 mobile unit*

DANGEROUS TIMES LP/CD (1998) -
*Beer City (LP)/Subway (CD) recorded
live at the Beer City warehouse by 360
Productions mobile unit*

Money, Malt Liquor & Guns

Pill Party

Street Life

Down

Rumble (Wray)

Hard City

Johnny’s Got A Gun

Commando (Ramones)

N.R.A.

You’re Gonna Miss Me (Erickson)

DP OR NOT DP (Netherlands) **COMP CD**
(1999)

Werewolf (from Eleven The Hard Way)

Money, Malt Liquor & Guns (from Dangerous Times)

WILD,WILD,WILD (Austria) EP (2000) -
Pure vinyl, recorded at Velvet Sky

Detroit God

Miss Mystery

Pot & PBR

Wild, Wild, Wild.

BLACK EYES & BROKEN BOTTLES

VOL. 2 CD COMP (2000) - Beer City,
recorded at Velvet Sky Studios

More

LIVE ON WMSE VOL.2 CD COMP (2001)
- WMSE live radio broadcast

Soul Revolution

MORE (Germany) CD (2003) - Disturbed
Records/Cargo Records, recorded at
Search & Destroy Studios in Germany

Pot N PBR

Detroit God

More

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QUEEN OF THE SCREAM QUEENS:

Interview with Linnea Quigley

Interview conducted by
Michael McCarty

Research & supplemental questions by
Michael McCarty, Charlene Indelicato
& Dominick Salemi

Linnea Quigley is one of the horror industry's most beloved scream queens. She has made close to one hundred movies, has appeared in Fangoria magazine a number of times, and is still a big draw at horror conventions across the country. She was ranked number nine on Maxim magazine's "Hottest Women Of Horror Movies."

Linnea Quigley has starred in her share of horror cult classics such as Return Of The Living Dead, Night Of The Demons, Hollywood Chainsaw Hookers, Sorority Babes In The Slimeball Bowl-O-Rama, Silent Night, Deadly Night (I have a warm spot in my heart, or elsewhere, for her "Best Impaled-on-Antlers" performance in that film), Nightmare Sisters, and Jack-O.

Besides producing movies, she plays guitar and sings in the all-girl rock band The Skirts. She was the first woman inducted into the Horror Hall Of Fame by Fangoria. This from a lady whose first big break in showbiz was acting in a toothpaste commercial.

She decided to move to Florida to be closer to her parents in early 2000. She currently lives in South Florida with myriad pets while working in her spare time to promote animal rights. Currently, she is planning on moving back to California.

Not to put too fine a point on it, Linnea Quigley is one of the biggest stars to ascend the fundament of the low-budget horror movie market. As of this writing, she truly is . . . "The Queen of The B's." And to this we say, "Long live the Queen!"

To visit Her Majesty, might we suggest dropping in on Her at Her websites, which are, to wit: www.linneaquigley.net, www.myspace.com/originaltrash, and www.linneaquigleycircle.com

BRUTARIAN MAGAZINE: *How did you go from living in Davenport, Iowa, to becoming one of Hollywood's most successful scream queens?*

LINNEA QUIGLEY: Anybody that goes to L.A. gets sucked into the acting trap. You're working at some lousy job or something, and you find everybody saying, "Oh, you should be an actress or a model; you're very glamorous." When living in L.A., too, it's a more realistic goal than in Iowa, so I went for it! I started getting modeling gigs; and I took acting classes, and even though I was real shy, I ended up doing okay. In the end, I was totally shocked that it actually all happened.

BRUT: *You made close to one hundred films, that's amazing for someone who "accidentally fell into acting." At what point did you decide you enjoyed it and wanted to pursue a career in movie making?*

LINNEA: I never thought there would be a way for me; it seemed so unattainable. I was born in Iowa. I didn't think I was pretty enough, and I was shy. I also didn't think I would be able to utter any words or do anything. I wished and wished - it took a lot of wrestling with my fears - because the business is pretty rough on people. In the beginning, it was scary. I started out doing extra work, one-liners and things like that, and learned all about the business. I would help out on different things and learn as much as I could.

BRUT: *Was there an early movie, one in which you saw yourself on the screen and said, "I'm a professional actress now. I finally made it."?*

LINNEA: Did you read my old diaries? [Laughs] One of the first movies that I spoke in, *Fairy Tales*, I remember writing down in my diary, "Oh my god, I am a star now. I'm in a movie; I went to a theater to see it." It wasn't much of a part.

BRUT: *In Return Of The Living Dead when you became a zombie, the make-up effect they used on you looks like it was a mask with an open mouth. Did you have a hard time biting people when you probably couldn't move your mouth?*

LINNEA: It was horrible. There were two masks made. Dan (O'Bannon, the director and co-screenwriter) had Kenny Myers make them. For the close up shots, one mask was pulled way down on my face. That mask was used when I was going to bite people in the "send-more-cops" scenes and such. The other mask was used for long shots and had really exaggerated features.

BRUT: *In Return Of The Living Dead you stripped on top of a crypt that was lit by burning torches and was covered in sawdust that was supposed to be Spanish moss. Were you worried about something catching fire?*



LINNEA: No! [Laughs] But I was getting very dizzy because the torches were those sulfuric acid torches they use when there is an accident. The fumes from the torches were going right up into my face. We did take after take, and they lit them each time, and those fumes were brutal.

BRUT: *In the last half of Return you portrayed a naked zombie in the rain. Was that uncomfortable?*

LINNEA: Yes. It was horrible. It was very cold out. L.A. gets cold at night; the temperature drops like crazy. I was freezing. I couldn't sit down because the make-up would rub off. I couldn't put a towel around me because the make-up would rub off. It was just horrible.

BRUT: *What was it like working on the original Night Of The Demons?*

LINNEA: I kept telling them I wouldn't go up for the role because the cast was all teenagers, and I was sick of going to interviews where they wanted someone who looked about twelve. [Laughs]

It was weird because everyone was so young, I didn't know how to say some of the words in the script like "wuss." I kept saying "wus."

BRUT: *Were you about twenty-five years old then?*

LINNEA: Yeah. There was a huge age gap between us.

BRUT: *Let's talk about the remake of Night Of The Demons – coming out later this year. What can you tell us about it?*

LINNEA: It takes place many years later and everybody is wearing less clothing. [Laughs] Oh no, that doesn't happen. [Laughs] It is a little creepier. More importantly, there is a lot more money

to work with. The writers, the director, everybody is great. Kevin (S. Tenney – the director of the original) approved it. That's a good thing because most people wouldn't want a remake to turn out badly. I think people will be happy with the remake.

DANNA TAYLOR (Personal, Creative and Business Manager Time Square Productions, Taylored Entertainment; Linnea's manager): I am going to interject something here. There were a lot of people who found out about the remake, and they were really irritated. Their take on it was that they were not going to see it because Linnea was not in it. Yet we couldn't announce Linnea was in it until the production company announced it. When production announced it, hundreds of emails came in saying, "We approve of this now because Linnea is actually in it."

LINNEA: It was nice. Kevin Tenney said he was going to get me in the movie and that was amazing, because promises of that sort usually aren't kept in this business.

BRUT: *Besides the Night Of The Demons remake, what else are you working on?*

LINNEA: *Post Mortem America, 2021* – that is going to be real kick-ass, and should be out very soon. There are a number of other films in production. I am doing a lot of writing and producing. I co-produced *Vampire Theater* which is coming out any day now on DVD. *The Notorious Colonel Steel* just came out, and *Salvage Streets* was re-released as a special edition. So was *Hollywood Chainsaw Hookers*.

I also did a scream track for a song called "Scream Queen" by a band called Rip Snorter. It is going to rock!

BRUT: *What's your secret for continuing to look so good? Do your zombie workouts have anything to do with that?*



LINNEA: Yes! [Laughs] I must say, living in California, though, is the best treatment for anyone. I should be moving back there soon.

BRUT: *What is your opinion of CGI (computer generated images) in genre films?*

LINNEA: I don't like them. I remember watching *Terminator 2* and that was the first time I really ever saw CGI effects. It was, like, "ugh!" It just wrecks the movie for me.

BRUT: *Any films you regret making and why?*

LINNEA: No, because it got me where I was going. Sometimes now, I look back at mainly how I was treated, and I think, Danna Taylor who is my manager – she is

amazing, she does things right. Everybody else just kind of sent me out to the wolves – they didn't care what I'd be doing, or if I'd be cold, or the food I'd eat, or anything. The others were so artificial.

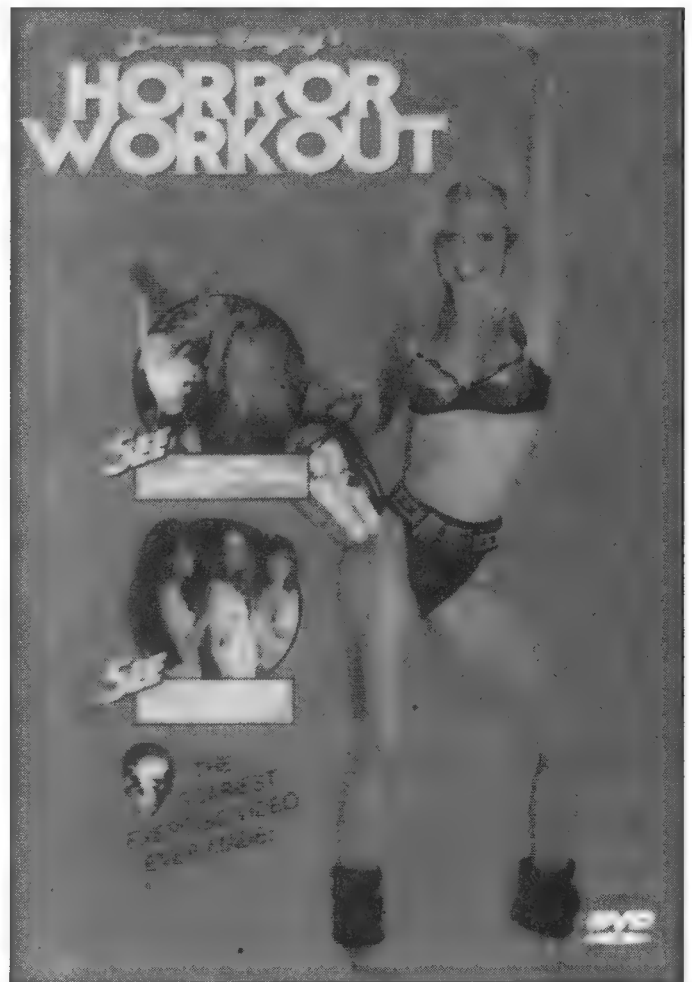
Back to the question, I regret, I worked on these films, where they were not treating me or paying me right.

BRUT: *Any projects you regret not making?*

LINNEA: Not really. There were films I could have done but didn't do because of circumstances.

BRUT: *Which films are you the most proud of?*

LINNEA: Of course *Return Of The Living Dead*, the way it came out and everything. *Night Of The Demons* - both the original and remake. I am excited about the remake;



additionally, it's really weird seeing another Suzanne. It makes me realize how things have evolved and how long I've been in the film business. Whoa, scary! [Laughs] I liked doing *Hollywood Chainsaw Hookers*. There are so many. *Hoodoo For Voodoo* was fun. *Treasure Of The Moon Goddess* was a blast. *Savage Streets* for me, it was a hard part. Everybody says, "You didn't have any lines!" Still, it was really hard to do; it was a challenge, not being able to make any kind of noise.

The one I am currently doing with Cameron Scott, *Post Mortem America, 2021* - it is a really great part. The weird thing is, I met him when he was sixteen. Now, many years later, he's making the movie he always wanted to make.

BRUT: *Do you have copies of all of them?*

LINNEA: No, some I don't. I need to find them. A lot of the films are hard to find. In a number of them, I'm hearing from people, "Wow, that was a great performance." The funny thing, though, I haven't even seen the movie. Moreover, I'm not even sure if the particular film has been released or how I can get a hold of it.

BRUT: *You are also a producer. The list: Creepozoids (executive producer), Dead End (producer), The Girl I Want (co-producer), Linnea Quigley's Horror Workout (associate producer), and Murder Weapon (producer). How did this come about?*

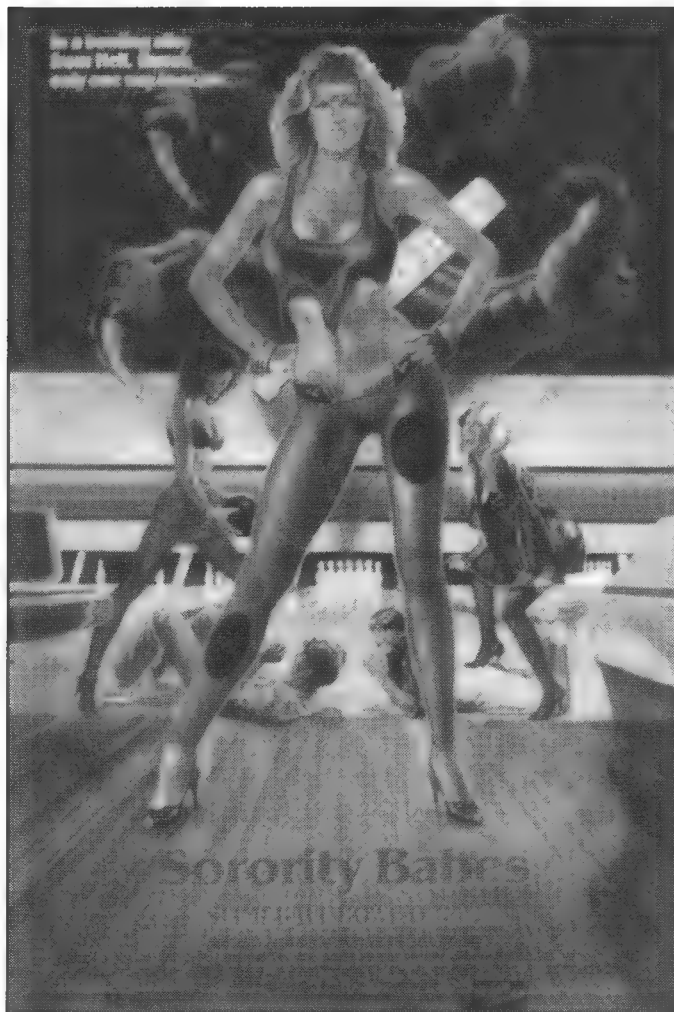
LINNEA: I really had more hands-on. It came about because I was working with David DeCoteau (the director of such films as *Sorority Babes In The Slimeball Bowl-A-Rama* and *Creepozoids*) a lot, and he asked me to co-produce, and I said, "Yeah." I jumped on it because I always wanted to do something besides acting.

BRUT: *You've spoken of your desire to produce films. If you had an unlimited*

budget, what kind of film would you make?

LINNEA: Cynthia Garris (director Mick Garris' wife) and I wrote a screenplay for a movie, a kind of old-fashioned scary movie about saving animals in a lab. It was pretty dark, a lot of action, things like that going on. It was a good script, as I remember. We tried at the time to get financing, but it was difficult. They were doing movies mostly for two million or down to sixty thousand. It didn't get done, but I still have the synopsis and everything.

BRUT: *You wrote the books Bio & Chainsaws; I'm Screaming As Fast As I Can; Skin; and, of course, our collaboration, the short story "Wizard Of Ooze" (which is in my book Little Creatures and reprinted in this issue of Brutarian). Anything else you are working on in the literary and screenwriting*



departments?

LINNEA: With Danna Taylor (my manager), we're working on a bunch of writing assignments right after the craziness of the holidays and everything. You mentioned "Wizard Of Ooze" which was on the preliminary ballot of the *Bram Stoker Awards* and all. Danna is a great writer.

DANNA: Oh, you are sweet.

LINNEA: Danna likes vampires, too. I love vampire movies.

DANNA: We are working on a couple of vampire things. We are working on a couple of zombie things. Linnea was asked to do a synopsis based on an old Universal monster; we are working on a treatment – a new old monster.

BRUT: *You also had a part in Nightmare On Elm Street 4: The Dream Master?*

LINNEA: I played the soul coming out of Freddy's chest. I got engaged after that. (The engagement was to make-up artist Steve Johnson – who also did the make-up effects for the original *Night Of The Demons*. They are now divorced.)

The stunt went wrong; the huge Freddy statue fell. We almost got killed. The one lady working the head, the puppeteer Mecki Heussen, fell onto concrete; she was probably about three stories up.

BRUT: *You shot Sorority Babes In The Slimeball Bowl-A-Rama in a bowling alley?*

LINNEA: That movie was directed by David DeCoteau. We shot it in San Marcos, California, in an all-night bowling alley. It was a lot of fun to do.

BRUT: *Have you ever appeared in Playboy magazine?*

LINNEA: Three times. The "Girls Of Rock N Roll," a dancing one, and "B-Movie Queens" pictorials.

BRUT: *How long did it take for the make-up artists to apply the body paint in Hollywood Chainsaw Hookers?*

LINNEA: Eleven hours with three people. They thought it would only take three hours, and then they had to keep calling in people. I even called my ex-husband (special effects wizard Steve Johnson). It was ridiculous. It was a very long day.

BRUT: *Did you like the way the effect came out on the film?*

LINNEA: Oh, yeah. The effect was great but standing there for that long was horrible. I get very fidgety.

BRUT: *What was it like working with low-budget guru director Fred Olen Ray in Hollywood Chainsaw Hookers?*

LINNEA: Interesting. He's got a very sarcastic way of doing things. He keeps things moving along. He knows what he's doing. He was fun.

BRUT: *One of your co-stars in Hollywood Chainsaw Hookers is Michelle Bauer. You've done a number of films with this scream queen. What is Michelle Bauer like on and off screen?*

LINNEA: She is great; she is amazing. It is so much fun working with her because she is so down to earth. She is never, "I am a star." She is just a happy, go-watch-football-and-hangout-type person.

BRUT: *How did you get involved with animal rights?*

LINNEA: I got involved after watching this news documentary when I was twenty-

one years old. The show was about the experiments they do on animals. Those images burned into my brain. I had to help out after that.

BRUT: *Why do you think guys are attracted to “scream queens”?*

LINNEA: I don’t know. Some of the convention girls call themselves “scream queens,” but they haven’t made any movies. At least what I’d consider “scream-queen” movies. The concept may have changed, but we’re not hearing about anyone in particular; although the girl from *Saw* (Leigh Whannel who also co-wrote the movie) is getting a push. Am I forgetting anyone, Danna?

DANNA: No. There are a lot of underground people doing straight-to-video B-stuff. There really isn’t a new big scream queen. I see a lot of girls that want to take a lot of pictures with their boobs hanging out and a lot of blood all over them so they can call themselves a scream queen.

BRUT: *But they haven’t really done any movies.*

DANNA & LINNEA: Right.

BRUT: *You were talking about Saw. What is your take on the current popularity of extreme horror films like Hostel and the Saw movies?*

LINNEA: I think it is going back to *Last House On The Left* and things like that, where movies were really bloody and realistic. They are concentrating a lot on torturing women. It is the monster next door as opposed to the monster from beyond.

BRUT: *Any role or part you wouldn’t take and why?*

DANNA: We turn them down on a daily basis.

BRUT: *Really?*

LINNEA: I am surprised. I look at the scripts and go, “Oh my God.” We hear so and so is going to do that movie and it was offered to us because they had read it. The script is really . . . bad.

DANNA: A lot people seem to make movies that are just about how many ways can we get X person naked, beaten, cut up, and repeatedly raped. There is no story to it; it is a two hour rape scene and what is the point of that? That is what we turn down.

BRUT: *Any unfulfilled fantasy about working with big name stars or directors?*

DANNA: She has always wanted to work with Rob Zombie.

LINNEA: Yeah, Rob Zombie. Quentin Tarantino. Quentin and I had the same manager for years and then he got big. The lady who manages him, Cathryn James, she got him there.

Robert Rodriguez (the director of such movies as *From Dusk Till Dawn* and *Planet Terror*) would be great to work with.

I’d like to work with Mick Garris again. I’ve known Mick & Cynthia Garris for so long. I have a tape – I have to change it over to DVD. When Mick was struggling to get by, his wife was teaching aerobics classes. Mick wanted to be a moviemaker; he wrote a little something, we all had little parts in it. It is based on a true story of his; it was more comedy. I’d love to work with him because he’s a great guy.

BRUT: *Cheech and Chong are making a comeback and you appeared in two of their films Nice Dreams and Still Smokin’. Are they as wild and crazy as they appear in their movies? What was it like being on the set with them?*

LINNEA: Cheech is really a nice, smart

guy. Tommy Chong I don't know that well; he is more quiet.

Cheech is really into his career, a happy guy, a genuine person. It is so cool that he broke that barrier and got onto *Nash Bridges*.

BRUT: *Last words?*

LINNEA: I'm going to get out of Florida

and back to California. Also, I want people not to be so hard on themselves if they are in this business. There will be people who will try to take you down because they are going down. You've just got to be careful of that. You can get very upset about it. You've just got to keep your confidence and be around people that are positive and good.

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The WIZARD Of Ooze

By Linnea Quigley
and Michael McCarty
Illustration by Bojan

Scottie Thomas was used to dealing with all kinds of Hollywood slime-ball types. He'd seen them all over the years. The sleazy producers who wanted to sleep with the stars, male or female – or robotic, if it was a sci-fi epic. The diva writers who threw hissy fits if an actor changed even one precious word of their screenplays. The egomaniacal actors who wouldn't budge an inch out of their double-wide luxury trailers until everything went completely their way.

Normally Scottie was able to project a nonchalant manner, but sitting outside of the windowless office door stenciled "Jeffrey Terronez: Special Effects God" had him sweating like a crack addict and made his heart pound like he'd just run the Boston Marathon. He felt like he was waiting forever, but actually it had only been twenty minutes.

In his career, Scottie had worked with

some of the crème de la crème of special effects artists: Rick Baker, Stan Winston, Steve Johnston, Rob Bottin, and Tom Savini. He had always wanted to do a film with Terronez, who had made a cottage industry for himself for his realistic gore effects, earning him the nickname "The Wizard Of Ooze."

The petite blonde secretary had popped into Terronez's office five minutes earlier, and now the door opened and she slipped back into the waiting area. She didn't even look at Scottie as she trotted on her stiletto heels back to her desk. She wore dark sunglasses, a white miniskirt, and a tight, white pullover that showed off a bosom more implant than flesh. "What was your name again?" she asked, popping her bubblegum between "your" and "name."

"Scottie Thomas, director of—"

She tapped a button on her intercom with

THE WIZARD OF OOZE

ANNEA QUIGLEY AND MICHAEL MCCARTHY

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SLIME-BALL TYPES
SLEAZY PRODUCED
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a long red fingernail. "Some director guy named Scottie Thomas wants to see you."

There was a moment of silence. Then a voice on the other end finally said, "Send him in."

The first thing Scottie noticed was the office's minimal decor. There were only four pieces of furnishing in the whole place: a massive white oak desk with a white chair behind it and another one in front of it, and a white turntable console.

Who had record players in this age?

The soft, slightly crackling strains of Bach's Ave Maria played softly in the background.

Everything in the room was immaculately hospital-white: the walls and ceiling, the shag carpet and thick curtains, even the rug-runner leading up to the desk.

Jeffrey was dressed in white, silky pajamas and stood at the window, looking out over the city. All Scottie could see was his back and his long, long flowing black hair.

"Have a seat," the special effects man said. The director did as he was told.

Jeffrey turned around. He wore a pair of black horn-rimmed sunglasses. "PJs and shades? Pretty weird outfit for three in the afternoon – even by Hollywood standards," Scottie thought.

"Why did you come here and interrupt my transcendental meditation?" Jeffrey asked.

"I have a movie—"

"Ahhh," he said, clasping his hands together. "Another script. Everyone seems to have a script for me to read. Every busboy, bartender, taxi driver, and golf caddy. Even my secretary, and she only types sixteen words a minute. Go on."

"My producer Jerry Buckingham III has a generous offer if you want to do the film . . ." the director said, handing him a slip of paper with a figure written on it.

Jeffrey took a look at the paper and sneered. "I don't care about your chicken feed."

"We have a great script, written by hot new screenwriters Kevin Weston and Josh Yuspa,"

he said. He set the script on the desk.

"I don't care about your soporific screenplay," the special-effects guru said with a dismissive wave of his hand.

Scottie started to sweat more. "We have Lisa England, star of *Attack of the Giant Leeches from Outer Space*, and Danny Carpenter, star of the cable-TV series 'Vampires of Vegas.'"

"I don't care about your has-beens and wannabes."

Scottie paused and thought about the situation. "What do you care about, then?"

Jeffrey drew closer, then leaned against the desk to lower his face to Scottie's level. "Does the movie have a lot of gore? Lots and lots of stomach-churning violence? Is it bloody? Buckets of blood, blood, and more blood?"

"Yes. It is filled with gruesome, gratuitous, senseless violence."

The special effects man finally smiled. "Then I will do it." He pressed a button on the intercom. "Ermelinde, I'll be doing business with our visitor, Mr. Thomas. Please bring in the appropriate documents."

Within seconds, the busty blonde entered the office with a pile of papers that must have weighed at least twenty pounds. She dropped the bundle on the desk and strutted back to her office.

"Maybe I should have my lawyer look at all this first . . ." Scottie said, leafing through the papers. Some of the pages even had phrases in Old English and Latin.

"Successful working relationships are built on trust, not arguments made by debating ambulance chasers. I'm sorry I misjudged you. Obviously there is a lack of trust here and . . ."

Before the special effects artist could finish his sentence, Scottie picked up his pen and said, "Where do I sign?"

Jeffrey flashed him a devilish grin. "For starters, here on page 68 at the bottom, and on page 69 on the top, and . . ."

Scottie sat in his director's chair and

checked his watch for what seemed like the thousandth time. Jeffrey Terronez was three hours late. He called the special effects man's office, cellphone, even his pager; no answer. This was the first day of filming the effects, and the director was as nervous as a man with pants covered in honey, sitting on top of a South American fire ant mound.

A bus came roaring down the road coming to a screeching halt in front of the film crew. The bus looked like the one at the end of *The Gauntlet* minus the bullet holes and Clint Eastwood. Every window was covered with a steel plate, and on the side of the vehicle in big white letters was painted "The Wizard of Ooze." The bus even had vanity license plates that read, FX GOD.

Ermelinde was the first to step off the bus. She was dressed in white, but it failed to make her look virginal - tight white slacks and a white tube top that barely covered her plump implants. Her dark shades were her only item of apparel that wasn't white. She held a megaphone to her mouth and popped her bubblegum, which sounded like a gunshot when amplified.

"Ladies and gentlemen," the secretary said. "Please give a hand to the legendary Jeffrey Terronez."

The film crew applauded and Jeffrey stepped off the bus. He still wore white satin PJs and dark sunglasses. The tall man slowly descended the steps with his hands in prayer position.

Cristopher Garton, a young redhaired gaffer, ran up to the FX expert with a notebook in his hands. When he spoke, his high-pitched voice was reminiscent of a certain cartoon mouse. "I'm such a big fan of yours, Mr. Terronez. I've seen all your films at least ten times each. You're the reason I'm involved in the film business in the first place."

Jeffrey smiled. "It is good to worship me."

"Can I please have an autograph?" Christopher said, pushing the notebook in front of the special effects man's face.

Ermelinde stepped in front of her boss and pushed the notebook away. "No autographs

allowed," she said sternly.

"No written documentation of any kind," Terronez said flatly, walking past the stunned gaffer.

"Things have been just plain weird since Terronez made his grand entrance," Scottie thought as he played his eighth game of solitaire, waiting for the goddamn rain to stop.

"All this rain - now that's weird," the director reflected. "I picked New Mexico in the summer because it hardly ever rains this time of year. Now look at it. Shit, where's my ark? All this rain has put us a whole month behind schedule. And then the crew members keep disappearing. It's like I'm on the set of some teen slasher flick."

The first crew member to vanish was Christopher Garton. Of course, the fact that Terronez had refused to give out an autograph had probably upset the kid. Christopher was a sensitive little scrub; maybe that was why he just stopped showing up for work without even saying goodbye to anyone.

Then Danny Nicks, the soundman, took off. He went out riding his motorcycle to the nearby town to pick up some beer and never returned. But who knows, maybe he met some hot biker chick and rolled off into the sunset. Danny was the kind of horndog who would do something like that.

But the oddest disappearance was Scottie's assistant, Leesa Matheson. She had been working with him for the last ten years. She wasn't the kind to just leave without telling anyone. Of course, Terronez was making the filming process a living hell with all his ranting and raving. Nothing was ever good enough for him. If his chicken salad had even the tiniest speck of dark meat in it, he'd throw it to the ground in front of everyone. And woe to anyone if they handed him a fizzy soft drink that had gone just a little flat. Terronez demanded fizz, and he'd splash the drink into the face of whomever had served it to him.



Illustration by Bojan

Five or six times, that had been Leesa.

Scottie flipped over another card. The ace of spades.

Terronez has been a real pain in the ass – but at least his effects were realistic. The fake guts, hearts, brains, eyeballs, and spinal columns were the slickest and ooziest Scottie had ever seen. And the synthetic goo he used for blood actually clotted if left out too long. The effects even had a bit of realistic stink to them. Some of the cast members complained about that. Ermelinde dismissed their comments by saying, “The master does not stop at visual accuracy. He believes that the performers must experience all the appropriate sensory input to foster maximal dramatic responses. So there.”

Terronez only came out of his bus, which was also his special-effects mobile lab, when it was time for him to do his thing, and he always brought his blonde sidekick. She shouted out all the commands through her

megaphone as if she was directing the picture. Whenever the special effects guru was inside the bus, Ermelinde was always standing outside, like a watchdog. What the hell was Terronez doing in there for all those hours? Surely he’d prepared most of the special effects in advance. Why would he wait until the last minute?

Jeffrey pushed the cards off the table. He was bored with the game, and with the rain, too.

It was time for a few script changes.

“To hell with this fucking rain,” Scottie said to nobody at all as he climbed inside the cabin of his helicopter. He’d decided he would do some aerial location shots during

the downpour. Maybe later he'd work in some scenes with a "dark-and-stormy-night" kind of feel. He started the engine and the aircraft began to rise. The director had a pilot's license from a brief military stint, and that license was now invaluable since the original studio's pilot had also recently disappeared.

The helicopter flew over Terronez's special effects bus. Emerlinde stood guard outside the bus holding a white umbrella. He had to admit, she was one hell of a faithful employee.

Then Scottie noticed that the bus had a skylight in the middle of the roof. Unfortunately, he was too high to see anything through the glass. The rain didn't help matters.

But still . . . maybe there was a way he could see what was going on in that guarded fortress on wheels.

Scottie's clothes were soaked, but he didn't care. He quietly climbed up the back of the bus. He figured the sound of the rain pattering on Ermelinde's umbrella would drown out any little noise he made. He crawled over to the skylight, only to discover that it was a mirror, probably a one-way mirror, so that light could still shine in. But why would anyone put a one-way mirror on top of a vehicle? That was just plain nuts.

He pushed his fingers under the edge and managed to swing it open. Terronez and Ermelinde weren't so brainy after all; they'd forgotten to lock an entrance. The director climbed inside the dim interior of the bus.

What Scottie saw as he jumped down to the floor shocked and nauseated him. He vomited within eight seconds of entering the vehicle, splashing the liquefied remains of a club sandwich across the bus.

Of course, the place was already such a terrible mess, his contribution didn't make it look any worse.

He had expected to see Jeffrey Terronez smoking pot or snorting coke, or maybe having sex with one of the few remaining

crew members. But it was worse than that — much worse.

Scottie saw Terronez cutting off Leesa's slender, freckled arm with a machete. He also saw the remaining body parts of other members of the film crew: on tabletops, in trays, stuffed in bottles. He even saw some heads speared on sticks, which in turn were stuck in an umbrella stand.

"So you've discovered the truth," Terronez sneered as he walked over to the director. "What took you so long? I left the latch open up there. I figured you'd find your way in."

"You'll never get away with this! I'm going to call the police," Scottie said, pulling his cellphone out of his pocket; he hoped it wasn't too wet to operate.

Terronez knocked the phone onto the floor and smashed it with his foot. "Ha! It would be hard to finish the movie with your special-effects guy in prison, wouldn't it?"

Before Scottie could answer, Terronez said, "I am indispensable; you are not."

"What are you talking about?" Scottie said nervously. "I'm the director. I'm the most important guy here."

Terronez shrugged. "I'm afraid not. Emerlinde can fill in for you. She is a lady of many talents: sound, camera, editing, acting, directing. She can do it all. She's a genius, really, with an I.Q. of 187. She's also my sister, and I really don't like the way you've been ogling her. That look of fear on your face right now is really priceless! In fact, I think it would be perfect for the final decapitation scene."

Before Scottie could scream, Terronez swung the machete, slicing through the director's neck. The way the head toppled off the body looked exactly like one of Tom Savini's *Friday The 13th* effects, but this scene used a real head.

The Los Angeles world premiere for the film was held at midnight, a Terronez idea, of course. Usually at these things, there were

several limousines dropping off the stars at the red carpet, so they could all slowly stroll into the theater.

But for this premiere, there was only one white limousine. TV camera crews, photographers, paparazzis, and fans all scurried to snap glamorous shots of Jeffrey Terronez in his silky white PJs and dark sunglasses, and Emerlinde in her long, white gown and black shades.

Aimee Breeze, Entertainment Reporter for "Talent Tonight," stuck a microphone in front of the special-effects whiz and said, "We're here with Jeffrey Terronez, the self-styled 'Wizard of Ooze.' Jeffrey, your contributions to horror films are legendary. What can we expect to see in this new release of yours?"

Terronez smiled for the camera. "I raised the bar of violence even more with this one. It will be my goriest, most realistic production yet."

Aimee flashed a bleached-teeth smile to the camera. "Anything else you'd like to add?"

"Yes." Terronez kept smiling. "To those of you who think special effects are taking over today's horror films, I say, 'You're exactly right. Enjoy.'" He then gently took his sister's hand and walked with her into the theater.

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THE COLLECTION PLATE

By Marshall Payne

A hideous evil had descended upon the world. Hunger hollowed out the bellies of men, as well as eroding their spirit, their fiber. Pandemonium ravaged the streets, for those energetic enough to take part. Hope was a thin strand on the garment of prosperity: too high to be grasped, too insubstantial to be pulled, too unraveled to offer aid. Amidst all this, Jeremy played his violin, hoping his melodic strains might someday lighten someone's spirits besides his own.

He had become quite proficient for a typical nine-year old. A middling prodigy, for months he'd practiced until his fingers ached, finally yielding something akin to sweet music instead of the hoarse scratching from a year or so before. He would practice nightly, bow in hand, preparing for the marginal school orchestra where he easily maintained first chair. Eventually mastering double stops, assiduously perfecting his intonation, his use of vibrato, he had gained confidence that this unwieldy piece of wood could, in the right hands and tucked under a determined chin, produce beautiful music. Finally it had

happened. But as of late, there was no more school due to the outbreak of violence, the pervasion of turpitude, so he played only for himself. With only sporadic electricity now, he often practiced in his darkened bedroom, occasionally aided by ominous moonlight, depending on the lunar cycle.

Sundays, however, were not for secular music but for hymns, sermons from the pulpit, the collection plate.

"Today we will all give the thing we each prize most," his father had told Jeremy before the service. They'd made their way through the brutal streets of dereliction their once quaint neighborhood had become. Like a zombie movie, Jeremy thought, as he gazed upon the insidious faces fraught with vacant desire. But these miscreants were not dead or even undead but very much alive. Just ordinary folk who had succumbed to the wantonly wicked, a stoic depravity. He couldn't help but stare at the father who pimped his two young daughters in the street by the depleted drug store. Though only nine, Jeremy had a good idea what coin might buy here. He knew

one of the girls from school, Rachel, a little older than he, who'd played French horn. He didn't know if he was saddened because she wouldn't look him in the eye, or if he'd feel more disheartened if she would.

It had been a while since he'd been to church. Not from loss of faith on his family's part, but because it wasn't safe to venture out anymore. Today, it was easy to tell the minister lacked the fire from previous sermons, as though he were merely going through the motions, his own brand of clerical zombieism brought on by a world gone awry. The meager choir of nine sang with pale voices, their angelic luster greatly diminished by the foothold of malevolence unleashed. If only he'd brought his violin, perhaps he might instill them with the old fire. Jeremy hadn't lost that special spark, so he was sure it could be rekindled in others.

As the collection plate was passed, Jeremy watched the pitiful congregation, the truly faithful, each giving something precious of himself. A blind man - obviously determined to make it here through the cruel streets - offered his cane, setting it to the side of the aisle for it wouldn't fit in the coffer. A widower gave a photo of his late wife, perhaps his only remembrance of her. A woman with perfect skin offered her compact, though that certainly didn't seem like she was giving all she had.

Jeremy's mom had already given up her most important possession years ago, her virtue. Jeremy's devout father had always forbade her to work, so all she had to offer now was her wedding ring, which she dropped in the collection plate and looked away.

His father tossed his checkbook and wallet in after her ring, but since he hadn't worked in weeks due to the tremendous economic collapse, it didn't seem like he was giving up anything at all. He passed the collection plate to Jeremy and said, "It must be done. Of our family, you have the most to give, son."

"But I don't want to," he said, never being one to gainsay his father until now.

"Don't talk back to me," his father whispered harshly. "Especially in this house of God. Now do it."

Jeremy looked down at the razor-edged snippers his father had made him bring, gripping them loosely with a sweaty hand. All he wanted was to play music, beautiful music. Might that change the world for the better?


"No, I won't!" he said.

Showing no compunction, his father wrested the snippers from him and grabbed his hand. "This must be done," he said, as he severed the ring finger on Jeremy's left hand, the finger that made the sweetest vibrato, intonated the most cherished notes, and let it fall into the collection plate before passing it on.



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COMMON TIME

By Bruce Golden

He stepped through the pandemonium of vines and hulking, water-rich leaves as if walking on shards of glass, planting each step with caution, straining to see beyond the wall of vegetation. Shadows mocked his imagination. Every gargantuan outgrowth became another monster in his path.

Ignoring the pain as another barbed branch reminded him of the wound in his thigh, he scanned the foliage and listened to the distant but crisp sounds of battle. Through a break in the emerald canopy he saw a burst of crimson light streak across the cloud-covered sky like the herald of some great storm.

What was he doing here? He, Willie Solman, who used to go out of his way not to step on even a garden snail. What the hell was he doing here, in the Astromarines, trying to

kill creatures he'd never even seen, except in some grainy vids? It was crazy. The whole thing was crazy: the hate, the killing, a war over some godforsaken sector of the galaxy. It had nothing to do with him. It was none of his business, at least it hadn't been until the government dusted off an antiquated conscription act and snatched him away from his life. It was lunacy. He didn't belong here. He belonged back home, on stage at *The Bad Penny* playing the blues.

Instead he was . . . well, he didn't know exactly where he was, not where in space, not where on this planet. An ambush had separated him from his platoon. The chaotic images still blazed fiercely in his brain. Blood everywhere, weapons fire punctuated by screams, meaningless shouted commands.

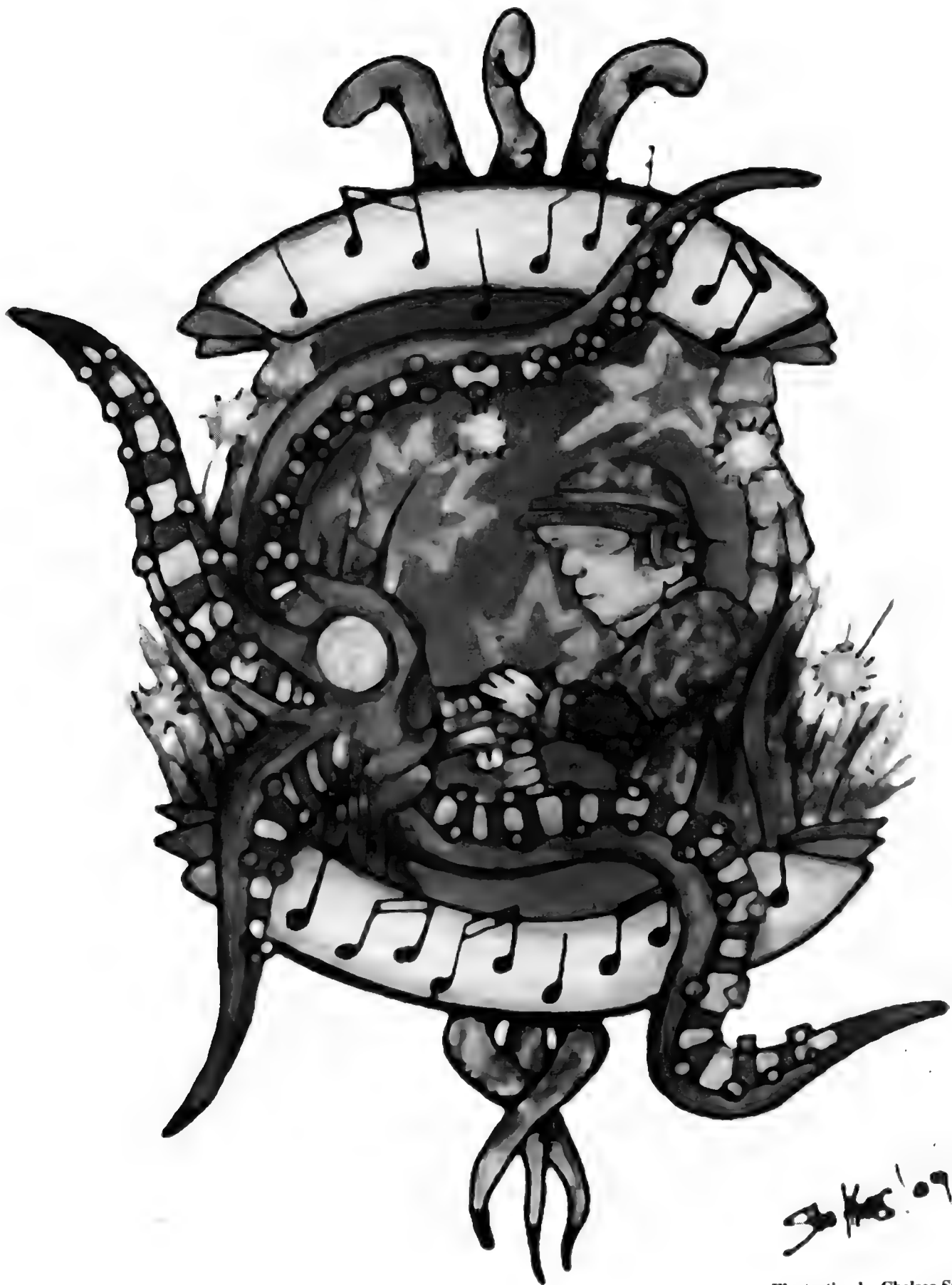


Illustration by Chelsea Stokes

Gilmore and Fitzgerald and little Jose all fell with the first blasts, holes burned through flesh and bone. He dropped to the ground and covered up at the first sound of attack. Rigid with fear, he didn't move until he had heard an order to withdraw. But withdraw where?

So he crawled, the fighting all around him, crawled over the dead, burnt body of Doc McGee - crawled until he collapsed from exhaustion. He didn't realize he was wounded until later. His first firefight and he hadn't even taken the safety off. For all he knew, everyone else was dead, and he still hadn't seen one of the things he was supposed to be fighting.

He'd heard stories though. Stories like the ones Sergeant Bortman told about killing "slugs" on Vega 7. He called it "exterminating." He described their blue-slime blood and hideous features, and how they would eat their own dead. Willie didn't know how much of what Bortman had told them was true, but the stories alone had been enough to make him want to go AWOL. But where could you go in the dead of space?

The tactical com in his helmet had been spitting nothing but static for a while, so he'd switched it off. His visor display was inoperative, as was his GPS. The heft of the M-90 in his hands didn't make him feel any more secure, but at least he'd taken the safety off now. If only he could be sure which way to go. Toward the sounds of combat? Away from them? He wasn't even sure if he could tell which direction the sounds were coming from. But anything was better than just sitting and waiting - waiting for God-knows-what. Another ragged flicker illuminated the sky and the ground beneath him trembled with a distant rumble. A moldy stench saturated the air, and Willie's mouth tasted of his own sweat. The humidity clung to him like a second skin, and with each step green mud clutched at his boots as if to pull him down into the bowels of this alien world.

He pushed aside another elephantine leaf with the barrel of his weapon and stretched to step over a rotting log. His thigh was growing

numb. He hoped that was a good sign.

Before he could swing his other leg over the log, something lashed out at him. Only a reflex duck prevented him from getting hit. He swung his weapon around, ready to blast whatever it was, and saw a long, purplish whip recoil like a party favor. The tendril vanished inside a hulking, frog-like creature the size of a cow and as green as its environs. It had no visible eyes or legs, just a bizarre crown of prickly thorns atop what appeared to be its head. Willie wasn't sure if it was animal, vegetable, or enemy booby trap.

He kept his weapon poised as he edged around it, staying what he hoped was out of range of its tentacle tongue. It made no other movement, and though it was soon behind him, he was now wary of running into one of its cousins.

The distant battle sounds had faded, but that only rendered the pounding of his heart that much louder. He found a relatively dry patch of ground and squatted to rest. He even let his eyes close for a few seconds. That's when he heard it. His sense of fatigue vanished and his eyes opened with the alertness fear brings. He didn't move, he just listened. There it was again - music!

A hallucination? Had an alien virus infected his wound? They'd been warned of the high risk of infection and delirium. Willie shook his head and listened again. It was still there, distant but real. The strangest sounding melody he'd ever heard. Light and airy like he imagined the pipes of Pan, yet hauntingly sad. At first it sounded like a flute. Then he could have sworn it was a throaty sax.

It reverberated through the jungle, each note creating its own echo. Willie found it both beautiful and bewitching. He didn't hesitate. He stood and began tracking the sound like he was tracking game back in Louisiana. He was drawn to it, no longer concerned with threat to life and limb. Music was the only thing that still made sense to him, and he didn't care if the devil himself was playing it.

It grew louder, convincing him he was

moving in the right direction. When he stepped out of the tangle of thick bush into a small clearing, he saw it.

The thing was leaning against a twisted tree and playing a queer-looking instrument shaped like a trio of snakes, intertwined at a single mouthpiece but separating into three distinctly different tubular openings. The instrument's oddity, however, couldn't compete with the thing that played it.

It stood on two legs, manlike, and was even dressed in military garb similar to his own. But that's where the similarity ended. Its face was a discolored, gelatinous mass, given life only by the two bulbous eyes which seemed ready to burst from bloated, quivering cheeks. Even several yards away, Willie could see the veins pulsing through its nearly translucent skin. It had no nose to speak of, but three cavernous nostrils where it should have been. The thing was hairless, as far as he could tell, and its mouth was a lipless orifice that wrapped itself obscenely around the base of the instrument.

Willie comprehended all this in the instant he stepped into the clearing - the same instant he froze, paralyzed by fear, enticed by the music - the same moment the alien thing saw him.

Its own shock was evident. It ceased playing, lowered its instrument, and stared. Reality replaced wonderment in a heartbeat, and both soldiers took aim with their weapons.

He was supposed to fire. Willie knew, even as he gripped the weapon, that he should squeeze the trigger, get off the first burst, and dive for cover. It had been drilled into him over weeks of intensive, shove-it-down-your-throat training. He knew he should fire . . . but he didn't. So he waited, waited for death to flash at him. Yet death never came. The creature held its weapon ready to fire, but didn't.

Willie decided to play the moment for all it was worth. Moving as slowly as he could, he shouldered his weapon. Almost simultaneously the thing standing across from him lowered its own. They stood there

looking at each other, examining more closely the dissimilarities.

Willie wanted to speak, to say he hadn't fired because he had no stomach for killing, and because . . . because of the music. He wanted to ask the creature why it had not burned him, and what was that strange instrument called? Instead he reached carefully into his shirt pocket. When he pulled out his harmonica the thing reacted defensively, raising its weapon once more.

Cautiously, Willie lifted the harmonica to his lips and began playing. At the first note, the alien relaxed. It propped its weapon against the tree and listened.

It was a slow, sad blues number mingling easily with the dreary rain forest, the small clearing containing it like a living amphitheater. Part way through, Willie stopped, looked at his adversary and grinned. The alien retrieved its own queer instrument and began the same seductively eerie melody it had played before. Willie was amazed at how the creature's flabby puce fingers squirmed up and down the instrument's shafts as if it were playing some three-dimensional game. Watching the performance, he found his eyes as mesmerized as his ears. He listened a while longer, trying to decipher the notes, the melody, then joined in with his harmonica. He played softly and tried to follow along. Just as he seemed to be getting it, the alien stopped. Willie stopped too, and let loose with a big grin. He wasn't sure, but he could have sworn the thing smiled back at him.

The creature took a few plodding steps closer and motioned towards Willie with its triple-pronged instrument. It wanted him to do something. A noise escaped its mouth, but it was gibberish to Willie.

"I haven't a clue what you're saying, bub."

It kept pointing at him as it lumbered closer. Willie realized it wasn't pointing at him, but at his harmonica. It held out its own instrument, and then he understood.

As they made the exchange, Willie's hand brushed the creature's and the clamminess of its skin filled him momentarily with dread.

The sensation faded as he ran his fingers over the smooth finish of the alien contraption. He couldn't tell if it was made of highly-polished wood or some synthetic polymer.

Willie raised it to his lips, hesitated before touching it, then shrugged off the thought and tried to play. The noise that squeaked forth was anything but harmonious. After two audibly painful attempts he stopped.

Meanwhile, the alien had fastened its own wide mouth onto the harmonica, but it took several attempts before it made any sound at all. When it finally discovered the proper method, the notes it created made them both laugh. At least it sounded to Willie like the thing was laughing.

Before the echo of their laughter faded, an explosion rocked the jungle clearing and knocked them both to the ground. The alien scrambled to its feet first and headed for its weapon. Stunned, Willie struggled to sit up as an armored juggernaut lumbered through the thick growth and emerged into the clearing. Behind it swarmed a platoon of Marines. Like angry insects they opened fire. Blasts of red-yellow heat crackled around the alien in its ungainly dash for cover.

Willie staggered to his feet and looked at his fellow Marines through a daze of colliding emotions. Before he could think to call out, the alien disappeared into the bush. Then the jungle exploded in a concussion of shredded leaves and flying mud. The creature's weapon twirled end over end, in dreamlike slow motion through the debris shower.

"Keep moving! Stay alert, stay close!" The platoon leader added a wave of his arm to his commands and moved in behind the treads of the still rolling vehicle.

Willie stood mute, a stupefied glaze plastered his face. His arms hung limp, his weapon in one hand, the alien instrument in the other.

"Hey! You okay?" A baby-faced Marine tried to get his attention. "I said are you okay?"

Willie nodded in the affirmative and the Marine moved on. As quickly as it had stormed

the clearing the attack force moved out, the only evidence of its passing the mangled vegetation. Still standing, still staring off towards the jungle where the alien soldier had disappeared, Willie tried to breach the haze clouding his brain. He lifted the strange instrument in his hand, astonished to discover he still had it. His other hand opened, and his M-90 fell to the mud. With both hands he raised the queer mouthpiece to his lips and . . .

* * * *

. . . he played. He played it like it was an old friend. His hands were a pair of hummingbirds that fluttered up and down its shafts. The piece was one of his own creation, a fusion of scalding jazz licks that steamed to a crescendo, then cooled and precipitated a more classical interlude. Rising, then falling, then rising again. By the time he had driven the tune to its summit, even the full orchestra backing him had fallen into respectful silence.

He played it like no man had ever played it, because no man ever had. No one else on Earth had an instrument like it. Others had made copies after his fame had grown, but no one had come close to duplicating its unique resonance. He was the one man with the one-and-only sound.

The finale came all too soon for the audience. They stood en masse and applauded with fervor. Willie bowed slightly in recognition of their appreciation and blew them a kiss. After six years, he'd become accustomed to the adoration, jaded really. He brushed back his long hair, styled at extravagant prices but graying at the temples, and waved to the audience. Those in the first few rows could see the forced smile he flashed them, but the stage lights washed out the wrinkles.

He backed off stage with the applause still thundering in his ears and wasted no time heading for his dressing room. Close on his heels was a short, heavyset man who smelled of cigars. He had a hard time keeping pace with Willie.

"Great show, Willie," he huffed, "just fabulous. They're going crazy out there."

Passing through the dressing room door, Willie pulled at the tie around his neck. He plopped down in front of his make-up mirror. An older woman handed him a towel and took his tripet.

"You sounded just lovely tonight, Willie," she said as she helped him off with his coat.

"Thanks, Georgeanne."

Willie wiped the perspiration from his face and began unbuttoning his shirt.

"Yeah, they love you, Willie," said the fat man, having caught his breath from the brisk walk. "Listen, you can still hear them. What about an encore?"

"Not tonight, R.J. I got nothing left."

Georgeanne brought Willie a glass of water and he took a long drink.

There was a knock on the door. A stagehand stuck his head in the room and inquired, "Is he coming out again?"

"No, he's not," Georgeanne told him firmly.

Before retreating, the intruder took a quick look at Willie, who offered him no solace.

"That's okay, Willie," said his manager, clapping him on the back, "save it for Sunday. Sunday's the big one. The whole world will be listening. Hell's bells, more than the whole world. You're going to be hooked up to every station and colony in the system. It'll be the biggest show of the decade, or my name isn't Robert Joshua Bottfeld." He pulled out a big cigar, flashed open a platinum-plated lighter, and lit up.

No sooner was the cigar smoking away than Georgeanne snatched it from his mouth and extinguished it in the water. "Not around Willie!" she snapped with a piercing stare.

"Oh, yeah."

Willie ignored the exchange, oblivious to everything but the face that stared back at him from the mirror. Success had put him in that chair, a preposterous kind of success that exceeded his wildest dreams. So why was that face so sullen? How could he spread so much joy with his music, yet find so little himself?

"Guess what, Willie," said R.J., twitching excitedly. "I heard from DreamWorks again

today. They still want to do the movie. Did you hear me?"

"Yeah, I heard you. Look, you're a great manager, you've always done me right, but I told you before, I'm a musician, not an actor."

"Hey, for seven mil plus a soundtrack deal you can be ham and eggs on toast!"

"It's not about the money, R.J., it's about the music. You've never understood that."

"I understand all right. I understand you like your limos and your ladies, your house on the Riviera, and all your toys. It's always about the money, Willie, and this movie gig will give your lagging music sales the boost they need."

"I'll think about it," replied Willie as if he wouldn't. Before his manager could extend the argument, Willie changed the subject. "How's your boy, Georgeanne?"

Her matronly smile dissolved into worry. "Not too good. He heard they're going to start drafting young people into the military again, and he wants to go to school and study engineering."

"Yeah, looks like the government's gearing up for another fight with them slugs," said Bottfeld.

"But there's been no fighting for years," said Willie. "We've got a treaty and -"

"Treaty-smeaty, those alien bugs are up to no good. Don't you keep up with the news? We should have wiped out every last one of them instead of letting them surrender. Hell's bells, they even let the slimy things on Earth now. Shoot, Willie, you know. You were out there fighting them yourself, back before the treaty."

Willie didn't reply.

"Maybe Georgeanne's boy will go back and finish the job you started. Good riddance, I say."

Georgeanne looked even more worried. "Willie, do you think . . . ?" But Willie wasn't listening. He fled to the bathroom, closed the door behind him, and stood over the sink.

Another war? More people dying? For what? For territorial rights? For steaming jungle planets? We were more civilized when

we just raised our legs and pissed on trees.

He felt bad about Georgeanne's son. The kid probably didn't have any idea what he was in for. Willie knew though. His own memories were too vivid, too close to the surface.

Still, he couldn't change the past, so why worry about it? Why not enjoy his success? He activated the faucet sensor. He'd made it. He'd made the big time. Did it matter how? He scrubbed his hands with soap and began splashing water on his face. Call it chance, fate, karma, whatever you wanted - it wasn't his fault was it? It was time to move on. Regrets were for chumps.

Willie grabbed a towel and wrapped it around his face. He sat, leaned his head back, and tried to empty his mind. He relaxed, endeavoring to unburden himself of all emotion. He needed a rest. Maybe after this next concert he'd take a vacation, no matter what R.J. had planned.

Then he heard it. That song he'd first heard nearly seven years ago. But he didn't hear it so much as it was in his head. Forlorn and ephemeral, the same tune that had called to him in that faraway jungle. He'd never played it himself; he didn't even want to try. But lately he'd been hearing it more and more, until he wasn't sure what was real and what was only a ghostly recollection.

He yanked off the towel and shook his head. He thought of other songs, other instruments. He hoped it would go away. It wasn't his fault. Why was he . . . ? Then it was gone as suddenly as it began.

Willie exited the bathroom, his hands shaking.

"Are you all right?" asked Georgeanne.

"Yeah, you look a little pale there," added Bottfeld. "Come on, let's get going to the party."

"I'm not feeling much like a party tonight, R.J. I've got a headache. You go ahead without me. I'm going for a walk to get some air."

"But, Willie, there's going to be . . ." Before Bottfeld could even finish, Willie was out the door.

"He's been getting those headaches more and more lately," spoke up Georgeanne, "and nightmares, too."

"Nightmares? What kind of nightmares?"

"I don't know. He won't talk about it. I wonder if it has to do with what you were saying. You know, about when he was in the war."

"That was years ago," said Bottfeld, reaching into his pocket for another cigar. "Why would that start bothering him now?" He lit the cigar and exhaled. "Of course those damn slugs would give anybody nightmares. It's not enough they've got to invade our part of the galaxy, now they're messing my golden boy's head."

"There's something else," Georgeanne said hesitantly. "I don't know if I should be saying this, but you being his manager and all."

"What is it?"

"I overheard him once, talking to himself. I think he's hearing things . . . in his head."

Bottfeld exhaled a large blue-gray cloud and replied with a hint of derision, "Let's hope it's material for a new album."

* * * *

It was cold and damp out, but he didn't care. He had wandered into a familiar neighborhood, but didn't notice a group of derelicts sizing him up. He also paid no attention to some late-night revelers who ridiculed him for sport. He focused on the bottle in his hand and not much else. He knew how to get rid of uncertainty: drown it.

He'd always thought being rich and famous was the end-all, but now, now that he had more than he needed of both, he wasn't so sure. It had been great at first, but what did it all mean now? Was he happy? Was he satisfied? Damn that tripet anyway. He hadn't asked for it. Now he had it though, and . . . he realized too late that thinking about it had been a mistake. That tune that wouldn't let him forget slipped back into his head. It began softly, like a gentle breeze. Steadily though it grew, until it was a howling gale lashing his tattered brain. That song, that memory. It was so real.

"No!" screamed Willie, flinging the half-empty bottle against a wall. The shattering glass and his own rage silenced the haunting melody.

He felt exhausted and drunk, but not drunk enough. He looked around, noticing for the first time where he was. He remembered a dive nearby. A place he used to play, long ago, back before it had all gotten out of control. He could go full circle, finish himself off there. The idea appealed to him.

* * * *

The rest of the night was a drunken haze. Willie recalled a band playing for a while. He remembered them because one guy, a strange-looking dude, was playing the harmonica, and not doing too badly at all. He remembered the guy looking funny because, in addition to a long overcoat and a big floppy hat, he wore gloves. Musicians don't wear gloves, especially harmonica players. Willie also remembered falling out of his chair and arguing with the waitress over how much more he still had to drink. A tip of significant denomination convinced her he was right, but after she brought the drink he didn't want it.

Sometime after the band stopped for a break, Willie passed out. It wasn't until the music started up again that he came to. There was something familiar about the song which woke him. Something . . .

A chill ran through him. That song, that curse of a melody. At first he thought he was dreaming, because it wasn't just in his head anymore. It wasn't a tripet he heard, it was the sound of a harmonica.

He opened his bleary eyes. The harmonica player stood alone on stage, performing that tune which had become a tempest in Willie's head. He listened intently to every note, every inflection, and still couldn't believe his ears. It wasn't possible. It was his imagination.

Determined to know for sure, he got to his feet when the song ended. He could barely focus, let alone walk. He took half a dozen erratic steps towards the stage, collided with someone, and went sprawling. Before he knew which way was up, someone had

grabbed hold of his shirt and hit him. There was much yelling and confusion. Willie felt himself being pulled away.

"You're out of here, buddy. I don't care how much dough you got."

Willie saw the bartender had come around to help the bouncer restore order. He reached into his pocket and tossed a wad of bills at the bartender, then looked to the stage. It was empty. The harmonica player was gone.

They hustled him outside and pushed him towards the street. He fell and didn't try to get up. He lay there wondering - wondering what was real and what wasn't, and whether it even mattered anymore.

* * * *

People poured into the concert hall like the streams from a mountain thaw. Even backstage Willie found their discordant murmurings deafening. Tripet in hand, he paced his dressing room like a caged animal. He paused to massage his throbbing temples and paced some more.

"Willie boy, settle down," said Bottfeld when he saw his client's nervous look. "Save it for the show. You know they're going to love you. They always do."

"Yeah, but am I going to love me?"

Bottfeld's phone beeped for attention.

"Yeah. What? Well make sure security clears him out. All right."

"Problem?" asked Willie.

"Nothing for you to worry about. Security had to chase off some old guy playing his harmonica out by the rear exit near your limo."

"What?"

"Don't get excited. It's no big - hey! Where you going?"

Willie was out the door already. "I'm going for some air."

"Wait!" called Bottfeld. "Hell's bells, don't be too long, Willie. You go on in twenty."

* * * *

Willie exchanged nods with the security guard at the rear exit and started down the alleyway. There was another guard next to his limo.

"Do you want me to go with you, Mr. Solman?" said the second man.

"No thanks, I'm just stretching my legs a minute."

He didn't walk far before he heard it - the phantom song that wouldn't go away. For some reason, though, the sound didn't terrify him anymore. It had become inevitable. He accepted it calmly, like an old friend who came to visit and wouldn't leave. He continued down the starlit alley, following a tune that wasn't there. Only when it faded away did he stop. He listened, lost because it wasn't there anymore. The silence was filled with uncertainty. Momentarily he was overwhelmed by apprehension. What should he do? Which . . . ? Then he heard something else. The very real, very ordinary sound of someone playing the blues.

He didn't have to go far to find the harmonica player, dressed as he had been two nights before. Half hidden in the shadows, covered in clothing, Willie couldn't really see the fellow. But he didn't have to. The stranger stopped playing and Willie lifted the tripet to his lips. He began the same slow, sad song the stranger had been playing, stopping after only a few bars. The harmonica player responded in kind.

"It's you," said Willie. "You're alive."

The stranger limped stiff-legged a few steps closer.

"Yes, it is me." The voice had a lisp that wasn't quite human.

"I thought you died on Vega 5. There was an explosion and then . . ." Willie's voice trailed off.

The stranger limped closer as if to demonstrate his disability and removed his hat.

"Only part of me died there."

The creased, rubbery features of the alien startled Willie momentarily, even though he knew exactly what hid beneath the hat. "How did you know where to find me?"

"The great Willie Solman? Who on this planet has not heard of you? Tonight's performance has been well promoted. 'Songs

of the Galaxy' I believe they're billing it." The thing made a sound that was part belch, part cough, then continued. "You have mastered the 'tripet,' as you call it, quite well. Much better than I ever did."

Willie lifted the instrument. "I always wondered what it was really called."

The creature made a weird-sounding noise that welled up from deep inside it, "*Hgs-doushk*."

"I don't think I could pronounce that," said Willie. "You know, you haven't done too badly yourself with that mouth organ. I heard you the other night. Those were some mean blues you belted out. I bet you've got quite a following where you come from."

"I am afraid the victors are more tolerant than the defeated," the alien said, then spit and coughed roughly. "After your military drove us off our settlement on *Klidcki-sh - Vega 5* you call it - your kind became the scourge of my world's existence." The alien held up the harmonica. "Yes, I learned to play it. I was fascinated with it. But my people hated anything remotely connected to humans with a passion I doubt you could understand. Your race, your technology, your culture, your music even, became an anathema." The creature hesitated, remembering. "The more I played the harmonica, the more of a disgrace I became. I loved the sound, but I had no audience. They tolerated the crazy, wounded 'war hero' only so long, then. . . ."

"How long have you been on Earth?"

"A few years, ever since they began allowing my kind here. The reception, for the most part, has not been very warm. But at least here I could play my music. Carnivals, sideshows, roadhouses - I played wherever I could. The locals are never too fond of my staying long, but I have my music, like you have yours . . . or is it the other way around?"

Willie laughed and the creature responded until its own unearthly chuckle ended in a vile cough. When the cough subsided Willie held out the tripet. "I guess this belongs to you."

"Not anymore," the alien said, and held up the harmonica. "After all, it was a fair trade."

An inhuman smile formed on its quivering face, only to be interrupted by another uncontrollable fit of coughing. It gagged and gasped for air.

"What's wrong? Are you sick?"

"I am dying." It paused for a moment as if composing its inner self and gathering strength. "The greater force of your planet's gravity, its fouled atmosphere, have taken their toll on my life force. That is why I came. I hoped to see you before I..." Another spasm interrupted, and Willie knew it was fighting for control of its own body.

"Look, I've got more money than I know what to do with. There must be a doctor who can -"

"No, there is no doctor on your world or mine who can alter what is to be. My race recognizes the end when it comes. It is instinctive. We prepare for it."

"It's not right, none of it," said Willie angrily. "I'm sorry I..."

"Do not play the blues for me, Willie Solman. I meet death with no regrets. I lived for my music and shall die for it, as shall you some day. But our music will live on. Maybe, one day, our two races will make music together."

Another wheezing attack staggered the creature. Willie caught it before it fell.

"Willie! There you are."

Willie turned to see Bottfeld huffing down the alley like he was three strides from a heart attack.

"For cripes sake, Willie, hurry up. You're on in thirty seconds."

"Guess what, I'm going to be late. Go tell them I'm on my way. Go on," he said, waving his manager away.

The alien being stood on its own, gesturing to Willie that it was okay.

Willie lifted the tripet and tried to sound upbeat. "Come on. I'll show you how to *really* play this thing."

The creature put its floppy hat back on its head, pulled the collar of its overcoat up closer to its face, and said, "Certainly, for *Cripe's* sake."

* * * *

The crescendo of applause reached new heights as Willie walked on stage. Smiling to the audience, he put his hands up, pretending their adoration was unexpected. He bowed, held out his tripet to the multitude, and encouraged more applause for the instrument. Then, laughing, he raised his other hand to signal for quiet. The ovation died stubbornly.

"I want to..." Willie started, then waited for the noise to fade. "Since this concert is titled 'Songs of the Galaxy,' and is being broadcast systemwide, I want to dedicate tonight's music to galactic peace. Peace among all races, all beings."

The call for peace was met by enthusiastic applause.

"Now I've got a special treat for you. Backstage is the musician who gave me my first lesson on this thing," he said, holding up the tripet once more. "Let's bring him out here and see if he remembers how to play it."

Willie clapped to start a polite round of applause and motioned for the creature to join him. It hesitated, pulling its collar up as high as it would go. With Willie still encouraging, and the audience still clapping, the shrouded alien hobbled on stage. Its weather-beaten wardrobe inspired a few chuckles, and Willie heard someone in the audience call out, "It looks like a slug. I think it is!" He had no doubt the bright lights had revealed his mystery guest's identity to those nearest the stage, and to the cameras feeding the satellite uplinks. He didn't know for sure how they'd react, and he didn't care. He handed the tripet to the alien, and its gloved hands fondled the instrument with familiarity. Willie gave it an encouraging nod and the creature began to play.

It played the same seductive melody that had led Willie through the jungle to his encounter with destiny. The same song which had haunted him since that day. Only now, for the first time since then, it was beautiful again, no longer a specter of guilt.

When it came to a natural pause in the piece, the creature reached into its pocket

and handed Willie the harmonica. Then, to the audience's delight, and a smattering of applause, they played together. Two musicians, in a world of their own, oblivious to everything but their music . . . until the sounds of choking brought Willie back to reality.

The alien clutched futilely at its chest, as if trying to rip open its own lungs as it fell to the stage floor. Its hat rolled off, and a collective gasp rose from those in the audience who hadn't already noticed its inhuman features.

Willie knelt down and cradled the grotesque head in his lap. The thing sputtered and coughed before it was able to speak.

"They liked my music, did they not?"

"You were sensational. They loved you."

The alien handed the triquet to Willie, then held out its gloved hand in expectation. Willie looked unsure, started to ask, then realized what it wanted. He handed over the harmonica and the creature clasped it close to its chest.

"I don't even know your name," said Willie, fighting unexpected tears.

"You could not pronounce it."

"That's a funny-looking case you've got there."

"It's custom made."

"What you got in there?"

"Just an old instrument."

"Instrument?"

"I have a reservation in the name of Solman."

"Okay, one moment please." The purser completed his file search, raising his eyebrows in surprise as he did. "You're going all the way to the Outlands?"

"That's right."

"That's dangerous territory, mister, what with them slugs on the warpath. You've got all the necessary permits and travel visas, so I guess you must know what you're getting into. I don't know why you'd want to go way out there though, unless you've got some kind of death wish."

"Not a death wish. Let's just say I want to

see how good I really am, and there's only one place to find out. Can I go aboard now?"

"Yes, sir. Your stateroom has been prepared and personally coded for you. Enjoy your trip."

"Thanks, I will."



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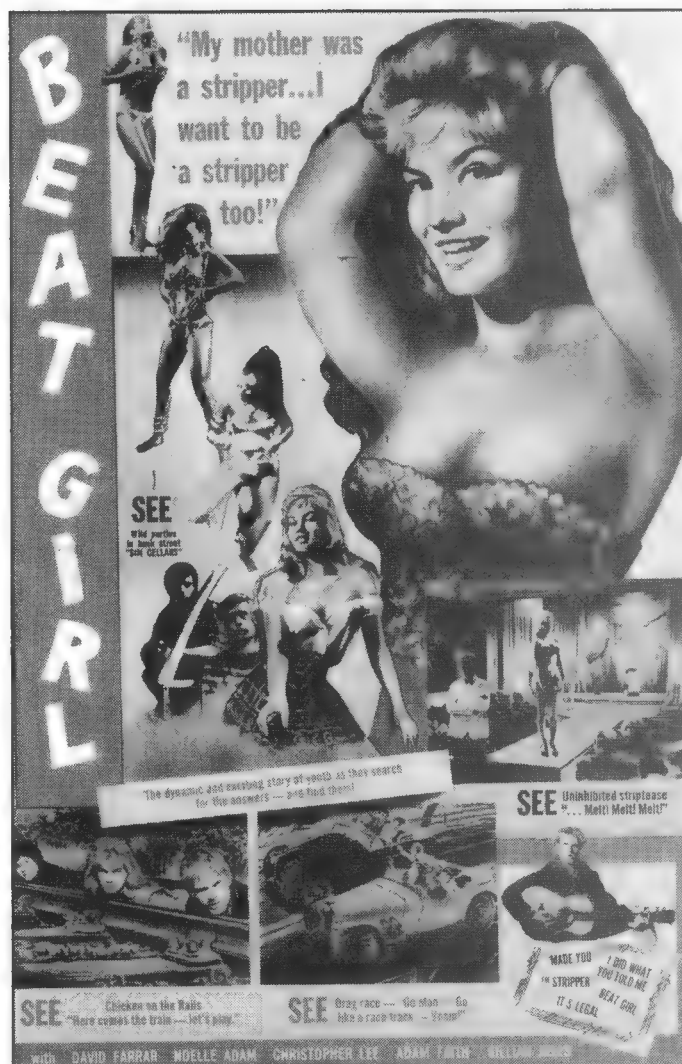
BRUTARIAN 53



Beat Girl aka Wild For Kicks (1959) - (d) Edmond T. Greville

Yeah, baby! An all wrong, distaff *Rebel Without a Cause*. Which makes it, of course, all right with us. Starlet Gillian Hills headlines as Noelle, a mixed-up, muddled-up, thoroughly shook-up, not-so-sweet sixteen-year-old bored to tears with her life as a wealthy, upper-class art student. Daddy doesn't appear to love her, you see, and when Daddy brings home a gorgeous, grown-up, French version of Noelle as his new wife, well, for Noelle, that's the living end. So Noelle starts hanging out with beatniks Oliver Reed and Adam Faith in a local coffee bar where she hopes to get the low-down, dirty no-goods on her stepmother. Just so happens the answer can be found in Les Girls, a strip club run by pederast Christopher Lee. And what a strip club it is. Herein the girls not only doff their clothes and push their charms in the face of the Johns, but hump the stage, the curtains, and anything not nailed down as well. Male members of the 50s audience must have delighted in such shenanigans, pinching themselves to see if they were dreaming, what with all the bare breasts and buttocks parading across the drive-in screen.

Not content with making life miserable for dear old mom and dad, Noelle takes to sneaking out in the dead of night to party with her psychopathic pals, to instigate dangerous car races on isolated backroads, and to engage in games of chicken with oncoming trains.



Our little minx finally goes too far when she invites the gang back to her parent's posh pad and proceeds to awaken Stepmom with a riotous, improvisational striptease in the foyer. Enter enraged Dad stage left to throw the bums out, at which point Noelle, in a bratty

rage, decides to reveal Stepmom's deep, dark secret: 'tis a pity, but she's a ho (apologies to John Webster), Daddy-O! With that, Noelle runs off to Chris Lee and the strip club to begin her career as a prossie-in-training, that is, as an ecdysiast.

As if the story wasn't risible enough, the dialogue, obviously written by studio hacks, tries way too hard to be "with it." This results in lines veering dangerously close to sheer gibberish. The acting, too, never rises above pathetic. Adam Faith, in particular (with Oliver Reed a close second as a sex-mad retard), disgraces himself with his desperate attempts to emulate Elvis in the two songs he is allowed to perform. At least Adam doesn't try to dance with his sidekicks; if one can call the spastic and clumsy movements of the cast "dancing." Nijinski these kids ain't. The incidental music by The John Barry 7, on the other hand, surprises with its inventiveness. It's deliciously sleazy - "The Stripper" has since become a cult classic - in the club sequences, and wildly reelin' and rockin' in the sham Cavern Club dance bits. (Available in the racier version from Trash Palace)



Hallucination Generation (1966) - (d) Edward A. Mann

Be warned, there is no easy entry into this film, as you will be hurled immediately and seamlessly into the debauched dreams and frenzied fantasies of some of the most boring people you'd ever hope to meet. Yes, you will experience every jar, every jolt experienced by the brain dead. Otherwise known here as: Beatniks, Sickniks, and Acid Heads. Idjits and semi-literates whose idea of 50s and 60s counterculture begins and ends with Maynard G. Krebs! So turn on, tune in, drop out, and get ready to witness the ecstasies, the agonies, and the bizarre sensualities of those seeking to nullify their lives while putting yours on a one-way trip to Nowheresville. Yes, man,



yes: a movie with no answers to a question that begs the question as to why there should be a question when answers merely lead to more questions. Or is that answers? Anyway, thrill, or don't thrill to actor and furniture maker George Montgomery as psychedelic guru of a coven of American expatriates in Ibiza waiting for their mahatma to, well, to just do something. Anything. While we wait, fighting sleep, a young poet and wife-beater turns up. Montgomery, suddenly galvanized into consciousness, decides it's time to unleash a crime spree on Barcelona. Before he does, he convinces our aspiring Byron to ingest every drug known to man, at which point the film itself starts to hallucinate, transmogrifying from black and white to blacklight color. Groovy, baby! (Available from Trash Palace)



Pleasures and Perversions on the Salton Sea (2005) -

(d) Chris Metzler & Jeff Springer

Betcha' weren't aware that the state of California had a sea? No, ya big dummy, not the Pacific Ocean, that belongs to everyone. We're talking here of an inland sea, some thirty-four miles long and seventeen miles wide. About ninety miles northeast of San Diego. In the middle of a desert. And the interesting thing is, it isn't even supposed to be there, as it was formed by an accidental diversion of the Colorado River in 1905. Well, after some sixteen months of furious work and millions of dollars of federal money expended, the breaches in the River were stopped but not before a lake, saltier than any of our oceans, was left behind. Still, a large unpolluted lake in the middle of nowhere? Cool, yes? So investors and large sums of money eventually

found their way out to Salton, and by the early 50s, the place was known as the California Riviera.

Without the Colorado River as a source of fresh water, however, the Sea, formed on a former salt-mining area, began to increase in salinity at a rate of one percent per year while remaining, despite its desert location, relatively constant in size. Add to this, a ton of pollutants from adjoining agricultural concerns dumping fertilizers and chemicals into the ground and drainage systems, and you have an ecological disaster in the making.

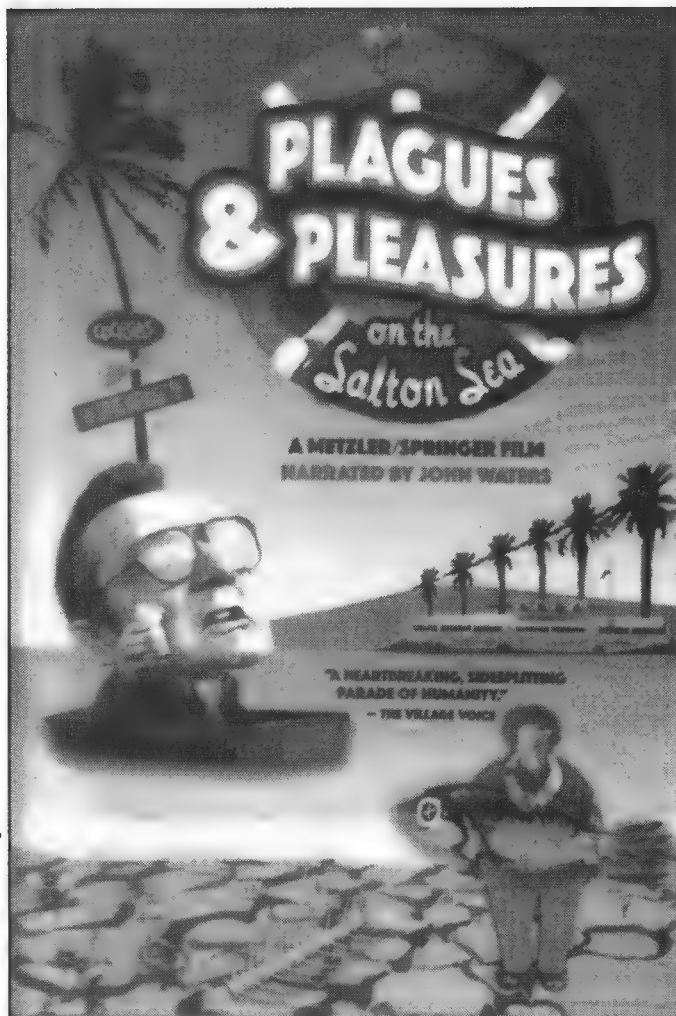
The disaster had its origins in the late 50s, with a series of hurricanes and floods which caused the Sea to rise, inundating homes, hotels, and resort areas, leaving thousands of dead fish and birds to rot upon the shores.

Tourists stopped coming. Homeowners picked up stakes. And the legislators and businessmen left the Sea to its own devices. This, despite continued warnings from ecologists that if the salinity - fed by irrigation runoff from the Colorado Desert's salt-rich soils - continued to increase, the Sea would become a wasteland.

The salinity continued to increase and surprisingly, too, the Sea continued to rise, taking houses and docks with it. This wouldn't have been such a problem, ecologically speaking, but the waters feeding the rise came from increased irrigation runoff from the Alamo River; and from the unbelievably filthy New River, with its toxic mix of sewage, landfill detritus, and industrial waste.

For the state of California, ignorance of all of this may have been bliss, but things finally came to a head in the 90s when fish and birds began to die in astronomical numbers: 150,000 eared grebes in 1992; 15,000 pelicans in 1996; 7.5 million tilapia on a single day in 1998.

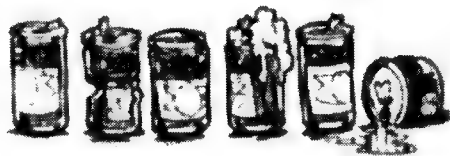
Today, as the filmmakers note, the entire Sea and its surroundings are considered a dead zone, "a fetid, stagnant, salty lake." A place, American novelist Willian T. Vollman wryly observes, suffused with an "unbearable ammoniac stench like rancid urine magnified,"



a stench that concomitantly leaves “a metallic taste alight[ing] on your stinging lips.”

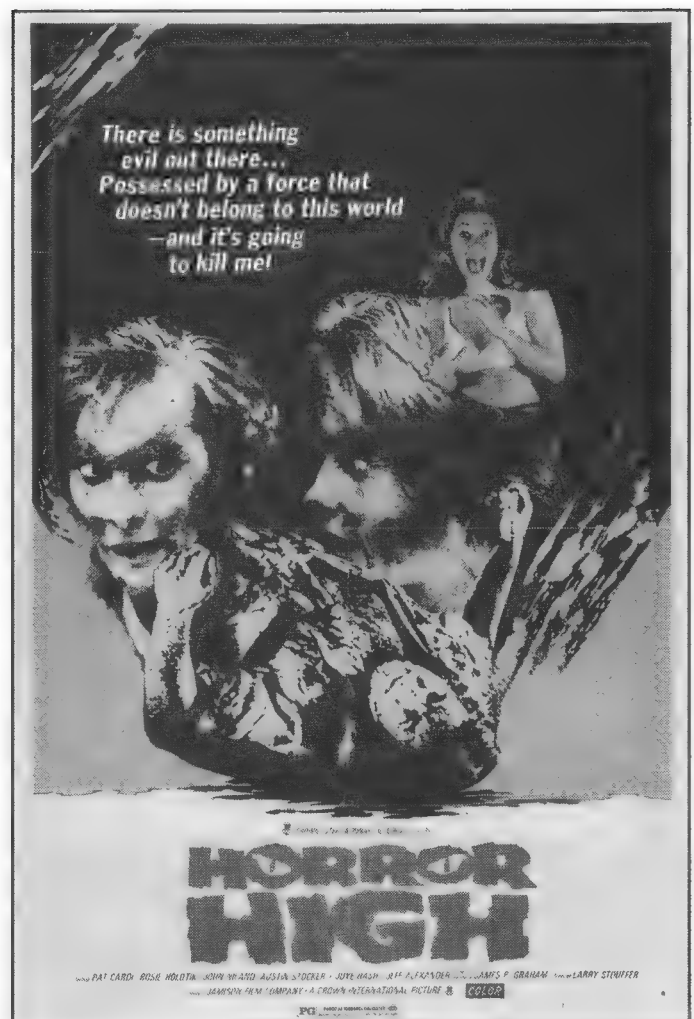
Ah, but Messrs. Springer and Metlzer have not come to inveigh against the foibles and follies and faint-heartedness that has resulted in such a fiasco. Rather, they are here to celebrate - while giving you the historic lowdown - the Salton Sea survivors, those brave few, these ignoble and delusional band of brothers who have remained, resolute in their belief that California legislators will heed the scientific community and restore their beloved Sea to its former glory. So, say hello to a wrinkly, geriatric nudist daily holding forth along the dusty roadside with startled tourists, a deranged evangelist tortuously building a misshapen mountain out of mud and garbage, a beer-swilling Hungarian freedom fighter who likes to “make de friends” with their kids by passing out beer and cigarettes, and all manner of crackpots, alcoholics, and drug addicts. A few normals - beleaguered park rangers, scientists, retired homeowners - are allowed to say their peace. While their comments and musings provide a welcome respite from the freakish proceedings, you're left wondering, as is John Waters our narrator (whose arched and bemused tone speaks volumes), whether these “normals” aren't the real crazies. Topping this delightful and incisive documentary are the sublime desert-noir sounds of

The Friends
of Dean
Martinez.



Twisted Brain (1974) - (d) Larry Stouffer

Oz had high hopes for this one. How could he not? A flick (original title *Horror High*) about a nerdy teenager discovering a potion that turns him into a homicidal maniac - what's not to like? Sure, you know it's going to be crappy, but so were the film's obvious predecessors - *I Was A Teenage Werewolf* and *I Was A Teenage Frankenstein* - and



you loved those potboilers, didn't you? Well, didn't you? And why did you? There was no nudity, and the violence was all offscreen, so what was there to like? Think back: there was the earnest acting by the likes of Michael Landon and Whit Bissell; horrible make-up presented as the work's *raison d'être*; teen angst dramatized in infantile Freudian terms; and dialogue bearing little relation to 50s youthspeak. In other words, the whole shebang was so wrong it was right. That's exploitation, baby! In this high school however, there are all the proper clichés: the brilliant, misunderstood, bespectacled teen; the blonde bully; the atavistic high school coaches (played by footballers Mean Joe Greene and Craig Morton); the lithe and lovely high school cheerleader, puzzled but attracted to our geeky anithero's intellect; and no subtext. There's no “there” here. Or there. Everyone is just who they are and everything is just as

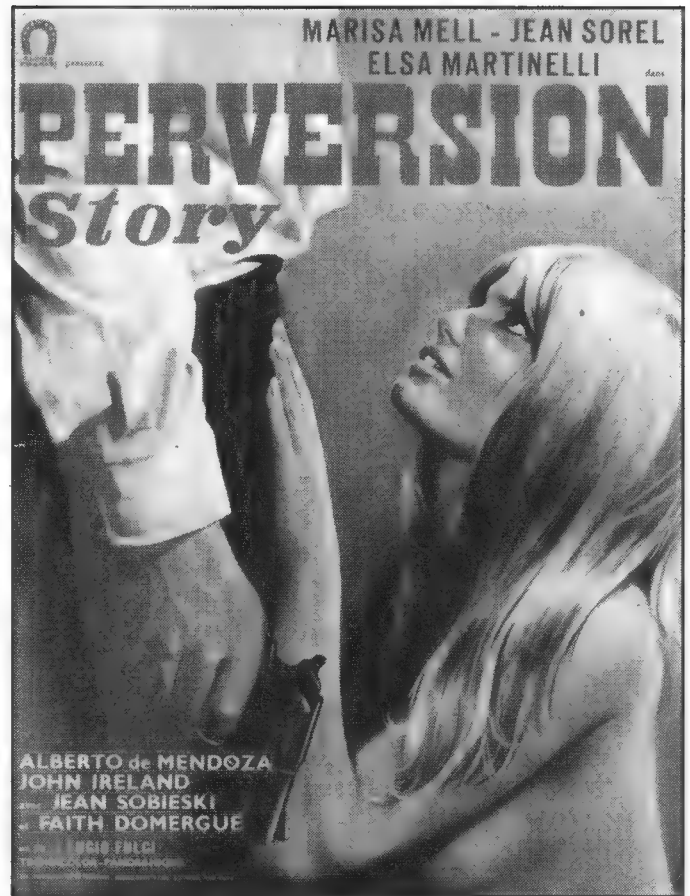
it is. There's no latent homosexuality in the bully. No nymphomania in the cheerleader. No suicidal tendencies or twist in the brain of our "twisted brain." There's no attempt to find the humor, or horror for that matter, in the Robert Louis Stevenson story, a narrative easily shaped or twisted into whatever shape you'd like. Which the filmmaker's tried to do here, going for a bent *Nutty Professor*-angle, but with dialogue from hunger and phone-in direction, nothing really works. For some unearthly reason, *Twisted Nerve* has garnered something of a following. Who these followers are is anybody's guess. Oz's guess is latent-homosexual bullies and diesel dykes, the kind that enjoy watching intelligent, helpless boys getting tortured and kicked around.



Perversion Story (1969) - (d) Lucio Fulci

Life is full of mysteries, puzzlements for which no rational answers or explanations exist. One which has puzzled Ozzy almost from childhood is the cult reputation of Italian hack Lucio Fulci. People, intelligent people, go nuts for his films. If memory serves, Quentin Tarantino mounted an expensive and monumental campaign to get the confusing and tedious *The Beyond* into cineplexes across the land, going so far as to stand out in front of theatres with a bullhorn and bags of plastic eyeballs before midnight screenings.

Oz will admit to being somewhat negatively predisposed to Mr. Fulci, as his first exposure to Lucio was with *Zombi* as a law school student. You remember the ad campaign for that, don't you? You had this great tagline - We Are Going to Eat You! - and footage of what seemed like thousands of flesh-eating ghouls - crossing the Brooklyn Bridge onto Canal Street in lower Manhattan. It all screamed big budget, but what you got for your money was an impoverished production set on a remote island, no plot to speak of, a couple of zombies, and laughable make-up and special effects. Ok ok, there was that one super cool



scene where the bimbo gets death-by-eyeball when she's slowly, oh so slowly, pulled onto a shard of wood. Still, that isn't nearly enough to make up for the promise of undead Armagedon in the Big Apple.

Zombi revived Fulci's career. Before this he had achieved some measure of success in Italy directing stylish, erotic murder mysteries or *gialli* like this one. And if the stultifyingly boring *Perversion* is a typical example of Fulci's work in this arena, 'tis surpassing strange how the director managed to get anyone to cough up funds for his projects. Like most of Lucio's flicks, and Ozzy has now seen several, *Perversion* looks beautiful; there isn't a scene where the viewer's eye isn't arrested by a spectacular bit of Italian couture or an interior exquisitely furnished in modernist Euro design. The erotic sequences, too, are subtly onerotic and surreal, dressed in gauzy shades of muted oranges and reds that are allowed to bleed and blend into one another.

Our story opens with one Dr. George Dumurier, owner and manager with his

brother Henry, of a financially strapped San Fran medical clinic. It's Henry who spends the bulk of his time at the clinic, however, as George spends most of *his* time running around with his mistress, an exotic-looking fashion designer who calls herself . . . Jane.

At home, a huge, tastefully furnished home, lives Dr. George's wife Susan, a lovely, emotionally disturbed asthmatic. Susan is well aware of her husband's philandering, and this knowledge does little for either her mental or physical well-being.

One night, while dining with Jane, George gets a call informing him that Susan has committed suicide. As the sole beneficiary of Susan's insurance policy, George stands to benefit to the tune of some fourteen million dollars. The insurance company, as is its custom, has no intention of ponying up, so they assign an investigator to track George. The Frisco cops, smelling something funny, decide to get in on the act as well.

The plot sickens when the newly emacipated George discovers, at a swanky strip club, a peeler bearing an uncanny resemblance to his wife. The mistress Jane is annoyed at first, but quickly falls under the mysterious slattern's spell.

So now we're left wondering whether this mystery girl is actually Susan and, if not, whether George actually killed his wife. Or whether Susan committed suicide and George and Jane are seeing things. Or if someone else killed Susan and is setting up George for a fall. But why the latter? And to what end? Trust Oz, you won't care a bit, because all of these questions arise about halfway into the film, and by that time you've more than likely been talked to death. Mr. Fide managed to stay awake till the end because, well, because that's the kind of loving sacrifice he's all too happy to make for *Brutarian's* dwindling readership. Still, there's no reason you have or need to.



Santo vs. The Daughter of Frankenstein (1972) -

(d) Miquel M. Delgado

Ah, the only thing more pleasurable than a Santo movie - a Santo movie in color! This installment finds the lovely daughter of Dr. Frankenstein holed up in a cave somewhere in Mexico, attempting to perfect a serum for eternal youth. The stuff the demented Doctor possesses is losing its potency at an alarming rate, and as its principal ingredient is blood from Santo's nose - taken from napkins stuffed up his nostrils to quell bleeding during particularly difficult bouts - said ingredient is usually in short supply. (Of course, this wouldn't be a problem if the sadistic harpy had bothered to query her brother Irving who had perfected the formula in *Santo & Blue Demon vs. Dr. Frankenstein*.) Apparently Santo is a kind of uber-human, and thus that



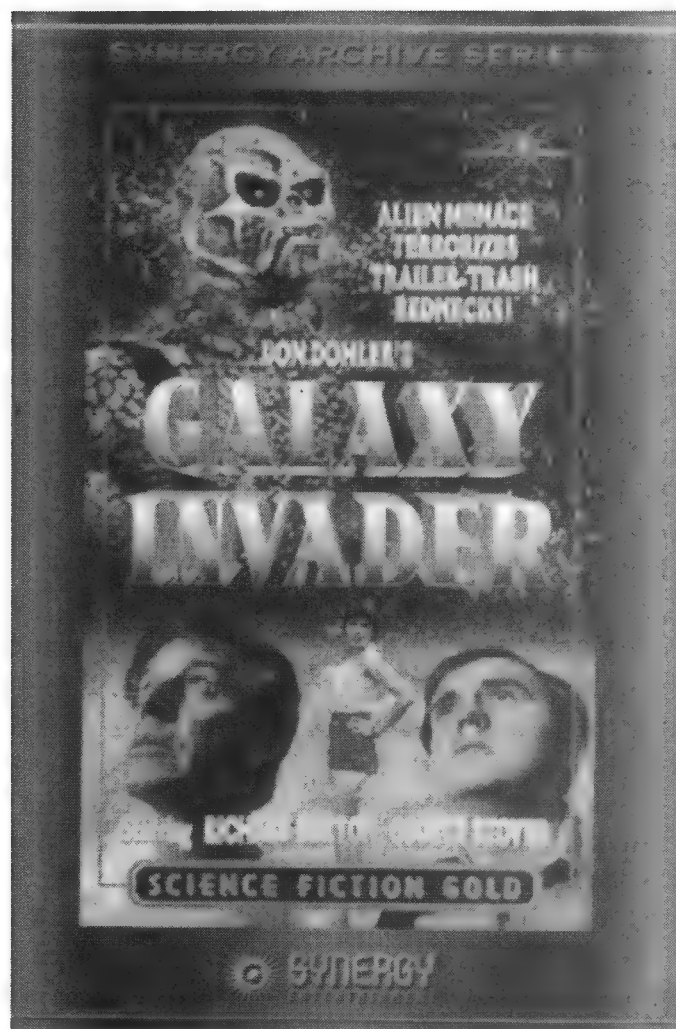
which flows in his veins, is a cut above what we ordinary mortals have in our pathetic, girly-man bodies. How the Doc manages to continually acquire Santo's bloody napkins is a mystery. As is the distaff Doctor's ability to keep blood and bodily fluids off the gold lame go-go ensemble (with matching boots) during her monstrous experiments. Ok, sometimes she wears a white smock; but if the elixir is now virtually useless, turning Dr. F into a wizened, dessicated mummy almost every day, shouldn't she be looking elsewhere for a special ingredient for her serum? Ah, we'll let all of this slide for the nonce; suffice to say that Frankenstein and her centuries-old assistants - kept in line with steady injections of youth serum - have come to the conclusion that they need Santo himself as a ready and continual source of the blood that is, for them, to quote Dracula who for some reason fails to make an appearance here, "the life." As overpowering Santo is no easy task, Frankie's henchmen abduct his girlfriend from her sparsely furnished apartment in downtown Mexico City. On being informed of this, Santo jumps into his metallic-blue Chevy Impala with his girlfriend's roommate and makes record time hieing it to Frankenstein's cave. Somehow, without being told, Santo knows exactly how to get there; then again, Santo is more than human, so with Him and in Him, all things are possible. The rest of the movie is a stone gas, man, what with Santo making with the planchas, and flying drop kicks, and double-chest slaps, and all manner of mysterious and indescribable wrestling moves. Whilst fighting not just a half-dozen musclebound stooges, but a half-man, half-ape (cf. *Night of the Bloody Apes* as this is the same actor employing and the same make-up) and the revived Frankenstein monster himself! The dialogue consists primarily of people either cheering or cursing Santo, giving the exercise a kind of surreal, literary flavor, to which the haphazard and incomprehensible plotting only adds. And just in case you didn't get enough wrasslin', there's a two-out-of-three fall international championship match,

with a game, but clearly outclassed Japanese muscleman. A redundancy, certainly, as no one is a match for the superhuman Santo!



The Galaxy Invader (1985) - (d) Don Dohler

So you think John Waters is the only guy from Baltimore making self-consciously cheesy films? What about Charm City's Don Dohler, who recently passed away in 2006? Here's a guy who, like all *Brutarian* readers, cut his teeth on *Famous Monsters*. From there, Dohler went on to start a wonderful horror and sci-fi mag called *Cinemagic* while producing and filming two award-winning short films. At the age of thirty-two, Don made



his debut with the *Alien Factor*. Its success on the horror convention circuit allowed Dohler to continue to write, edit, and produce motion pictures until his death at the age of sixty. The, ahem, considered body of opinion on Dohler's *oeuvre* appears to be that, while nothing Don was involved in will have anyone confusing him with the aforementioned Mr. Waters, all of the films are agreeably lowbrow and deliberately inane. Which is fine when we're talkin' fright flicks, yes?

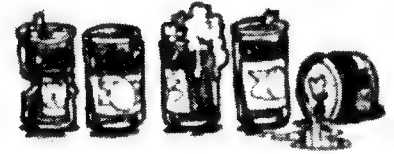
Well, that said, Oz is here to say that he hasn't had a more enjoyable time watching a movie with such impoverished production values and dreadful acting since *Invasion of the Blood Farmers*. Moreover, right after Mr. Fide is finished writing this inconsequential review, he's going online to rent as many Dohler productions as he can find. That's how bad-good this film be.

Story? There is no story; that's *The Galaxy Invader's* primary charm. A pale green, rubber-suited alien lands in a small southern town and proceeds to be chased through the woods by a bunch of gun-toting, redneck drunks. That's it, folks! While we're not watching the guy in the rubber suit try to keep branches from poking him in the eye, we get to listen to alcoholics yelling at each other, and K-mart-coutured gals scream and wiggle their hips. Nobody even attempts to act, save for Dick Dyszel (Count Gore de Vol in latter life), and he comes off all the worse for it. For, as we all know, there's nothing worse than trying to maintain your cool when those around you are too cool to worry about it. The dialogue aspires to the semi-literate and fails, not surprising coming from a director who doubtless ranks Forry Ackerman's film criticism alongside that of *Cahiers du Cinema*.

Ozzy's favorite character, aside from the monster which looks to have been fashioned from rubber tubing and crazy glue, is Joe the Drunk. He clearly steals the show, with his pristine white t-shirt strategically torn in all the wrong places, and lumbering, simian-like gait. Also impressive is Joe's ability to keep from spilling nary a drop of whiskey

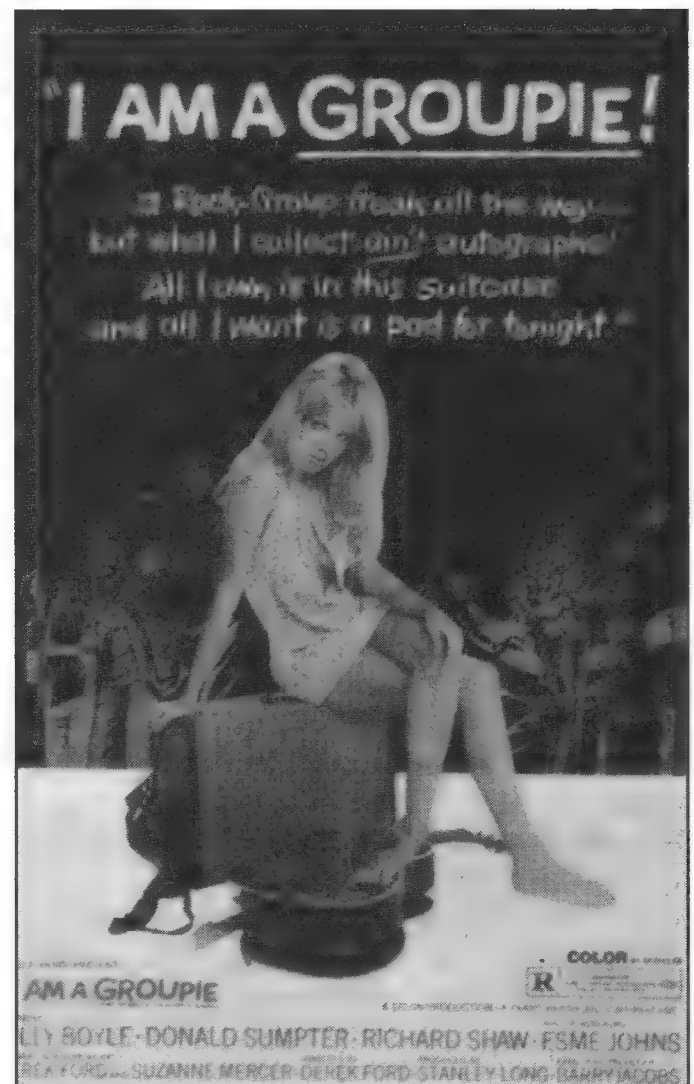
when passing out. Joe gets bonus points, too, for lusting after his daughter, a woman so profoundly unattractive even the alien does a double-take when he first sees her. And don't get down on Mr. Fide for touting the incest angle; that's how it works in West Virginia.

Oz should know, being a good friend of Senator Robert Byrd.



Groupie Girl aka I Am A Groupie (1970) - (d) Derek Ford

Oz thought this was kind of boring as it purported to be the inside story of groupie life in Swingin' Sixties London but turned out to



be little more than a dramatically moribund tale of a bored - and boring - young girl running away from a stultifying life in a small, British working-class town. Mr. Fide's heterosexual-partner-for-life, however, found *Groupie Girl* to be a sensitive study of a sensitive woman looking for love in all the wrong places. Not one of the places being London! Go figure! Then again, the galpal writes mash notes to Liam Gallagher. Nevertheless, as the screenwriter was supposed to be a former groupie, and the star Esme Johns a stripper, Ozzy expected to see all manner of Led Zeppelin-like depravity perpetrated on an all-too-willing actress. Nothing doing. What we get is a lot of desultory conversation, a cat fight or two, and a bit of tasteful nudity. There's a pretty effectively staged auto-van duel near the end, leading to a spectacular crash; but by then, you, like Oz, will be too comatose to care. What the trash completist will enjoy is the highly unflattering depictions of both hippies and rockers, and the surprisingly effective score, which includes songs by Opal Butterfly, a pop-psych band in which both Lemmy and Simon King of Hawkwind cut their teeth.



L'Anticristo aka The Tempter (1974) - (d) Alberto de Martino

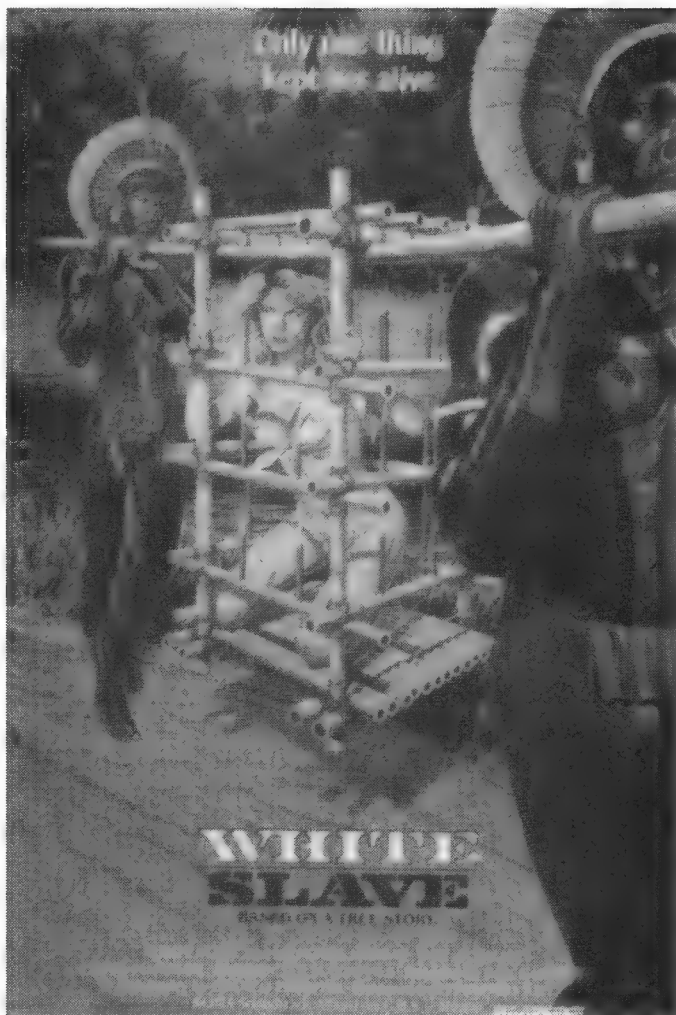
So sordid, shocking, and blasphemous was *The Tempter* adjudged upon first hitting these shores, that it had almost twenty minutes shorn from it! This, despite a haunting Ennio Morricone soundtrack, a marvelously saturated technicolor palette, and magnificent and sumptuous interiors. Now, hack spaghetti-bender auteur Martino's messterpiece finally sees the light of day in all its ghastly glory. Sure, it's a shameless rip-off of William Friedkin's *Exorcist*, right down to the levitations, vomiting of green goup, and flying furniture; but Martino, who co-wrote the screenplay, has made one eensy, weensy change, and that, my sleazy friends, makes all the difference. A woman, yes a full-grown woman, is the one possessed here. We are

spared the depraved sight of a prepubescent girl masturbating with a crucifix and copulating with invisible incubi. Martino wants us to take our pleasures free of guilt, and toward that end, he has asked the the doe-eyed, bee-stung lipped, and ample-bottomed Carla Gravina to do the honors. Why the flick was retitled *The Tempter* must remain a mystery, as Ms. Gravina, playing Ippolita the psychosomatically paralyzed twenty-year old daughter of Mel Ferrer, needs little prodding to start acting the profligate. The plot posits the possession of a centuries-old ancestor, burned at the stake for witchcraft, as the source of Ippolita's problems. Martino is having none of this, however, undercutting the supernatural element at every turn with langorously staged scenes, wherein the viewer is asked to watch Ippolita doing her un-level-headed best to manifest her desire for distinguished pater familias Ferrer, and her androgynous older brother. A psychiatrist is brought in to further reinforce the notion that sublimated lust, not demons, lie at the heart of Ippolita's problems. Once our lithe and lovely heroine starts levitating, though, all bets are off, and two priests (Arthur Kennedy and George Coulouris) start making with the exorcism. It all ends gloriously with Ippolita embracing a huge cross in the Roman Coliseum, and the audience comforted with the fact that the wages of sin is death and that redemption is possible only through complete surrender to the one true faith. With messages such as this, it's surprising the film provoked such controversy. Then again, you're asking for trouble when you allow your naked heroine to spread her legs and mime the licking of a goat's arse while being rogered by an invisible satanic priest.



White Slave aka Amazonia: The Catherine Miles Story (1985) - (d) Mario Garriazzo

Ripped from the pages of today's headlines!



The story so shocking, so unbelievable, it could not have been told until now! Yes, see an eighteen-year old blonde ripped from the bosom of her family, and forced to undergo shocking initiation into a tribe of savage cannibals deep in the heart of the jungles of the Amazon!

Supposedly based on a true story, *White Slave* delivers a few shocks, but those gorehounds looking for another *Cannibal Holocaust* are likely to be sorely disappointed, as the cannibals turn out, in reality, to be headhunters and thus there is no eating of the "long pig" to be found. Ozzy was, however, far from disappointed. How could he be, what with a blonde lead running around topless for most of the film's running time. And when she's not topless, she's nude, totally unabashed at displaying a dense, unkempt little jungle of her own, as well as the hot, wide ass of a wild animal. It goes without saying, although Mr.

Fide will say it, that the female denizens of the tribe stay virtually unclothed throughout all of this.

Let's see, what else to like? Beheadings, fornication, the ritual deflowering of the heroine, torture, mano-a-mano with clubs, death by alligator, and more. Much more, or maybe less more; Ozzy has trouble remembering as *White Slave* had him so excited, he found himself feverishly popping the tab on his second six-pack before the film was even a half-hour old. There's also a terrific plot twist that comes about two-thirds of the way into the flick, leading to a rather moving and poetic denouement. Poetry in an Italian cannibal flick? Yes, poetry and, of course, the requisite intentional laughs - the screenplay was written by Franco Posperi, the man behind the *Mondo Cane* documentaries, so he knows what he's doing. As an example, Prosperi gives us this scene in the first ten minutes of the flick: Catherine and her parents are off on a pleasure cruise down an Amazonian backwater despite the knowledge that cannibals are lurking just beyond the riverbank. Taking a break from playfully verbally abusing his slattern of a wife, Dad offers up these pearls of hard-earned wisdom to his daughter:

Never give up on life, whatever the price, Cathy. Live, Cathy! That's the only thing that counts. Nothing else means a damn thing!

No sooner has Dad finished speaking, then he and Mom are shot full of curare from poison darts and, in their now paralyzed state, beheaded. Cathy, also shot and rendered immobile, is forced to watch, then trussed to a stake and carried off board to begin life as a slave. Hey, if that isn't your idea of putting the "fun" back in "funny," you must have a heart of stone!



AUDIO DEPRAVATION



Monsters From The Surf - Monsters From The Surf (Frap-A-Phonic)

Soi disant legends, fatigued at having to compete with The Slickee Boys, Date Bait, and The Ubangis for the DC-Baltimore corridor crown of best garage band, retreat to the wilds of southern Maryland to record this, their only work, and declare themselves the winners in absentia. The debate still rages. Nevertheless, this is one fine party record: a fantastical mix of, quelle surprise, garage rock atavism ("Caveman," "National Bohemian"); shimmering Dick Dale-styled surf instros ("Hangman," "Kamikaze"); AIP-beach-soundtrack-go-go dance music ("Beach Blanket Bimbo," "Pajama Party"); and cool covers showing off the bona fides (The

Haunted's "1-2-5," Sam Cooke's "Shake"). But wait, kids, that's not all! There's even some genre styles that 60s-styled rockers normally shy away from. Like the raucous punk rock of "Cheap Beer," and "Hunt Fish," and, oh my God, is that cowpunk we hear in "Spurs In Your Face"? What's that doing here? And as long as we're asking questions, we'd like to know just how many durn vocalists this combo employs? Seems like there's a different singer on every song. We know from the pictures accompanying this disc that there's nary a girl in the group; still, we've got a whole passel of them singing on "Pajama Party" and "Chick Habit." Guess when you're the



kings of the scene, you can do whatever you'd like. Like letting strange people just walk on into the recording studio and sing your songs if you have a mind to letting 'em. Like making unauthorized use of dialogue from 60s monster movies and themes from beer commercials without fear of reprisal. Yup, no question - it's good to be the king. Even if you've abdicated to southern Maryland. Hell, it worked for Link Wray, why not for these Monsters?! (Dom Salemi)

Drumbo – City of Refuge (Proper)

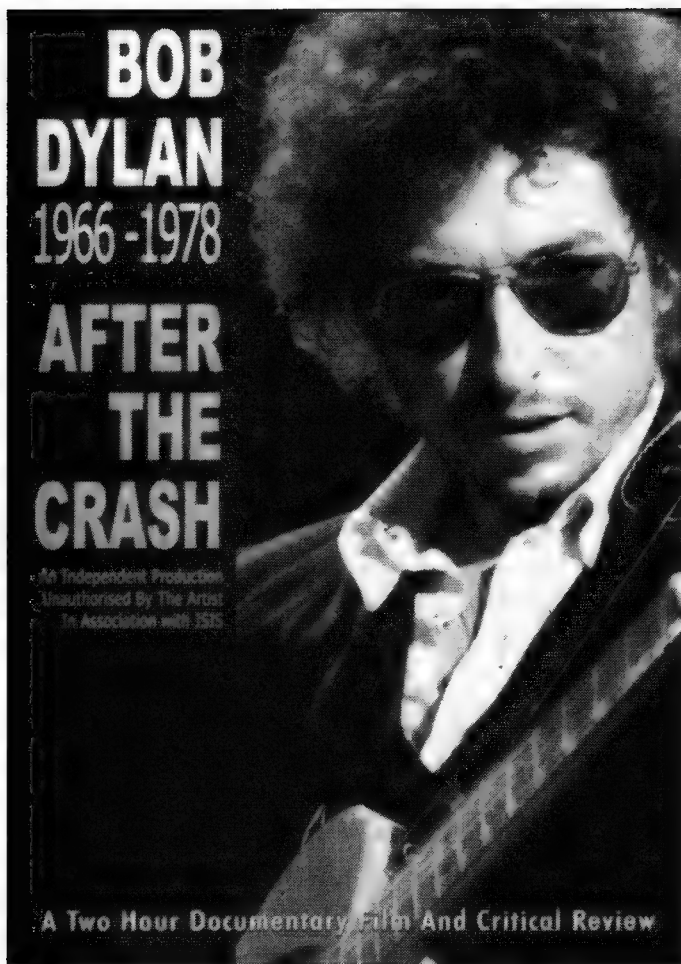
John French, AKA “Drumbo,” was a member of Captain Beefheart & The Magic Band during their best days – from *Safe As Milk* through *Trout Mask Replica*, *Lick My Decals Off Baby*, and *Spotlight Kid*. While the good Captain sacked and re-hired him several times, and told any interviewer who ever stuck a mike under his nose that he, Don Van Vliet, was 100% responsible for each and every sound or rude noise that emanated from the band or their records, it appears that French also had one hell of a lot to do with their sound. The nucleus of the *Trout Mask Replica* version of the band all came from French's band Blues In A Bottle, which also included Jeff Cotton, Mark Boston, and Bill Harkleroad (aka Antennae Jimmy Semens, Rockette

Morton, and Zoot Horn Rollo). Decades later, after Beefheart had long deserted the music scene entirely, Drumbo was also the guy who put together the reunited Magic Band for Europe shows in 2003 and 2004. Live albums from these gigs showed that The Magic Band was, indeed, still magical, and that Drumbo/French could also pull off an incredibly good facsimile of Beefheart singing and playing the harp. Here we are, several years later, and Drumbo has released a solo album *City of Refuge* which can best be described as yet another Captain Beefheart & The Magic Band recording! French's twelve original songs are written in the disjointed, dissonant style of Beefheart with the same level of incredible musicianship. He's joined by ex-Magic Bandsters Greg Davidson (Ella Guru) and Harkleroad (Rollo) on guitar, John Thomas on keyboards, and Mark Boston guesting on one cut on bass. French handles the drums, vocals, harp, and saxes. The tunes, from the opener “Bogeyman,” through “Blood On A Porcupine Quill,” through the title cut, through the closer “The Withered Hand of Time,” sound like vintage Beefheart. No, Drumbo doesn't sound exactly like Van Vliet's Howlin' Wolf-crossed-with-a-bullmoose-in-heat voice, but it's close enough! Sure to please Beefheart fans everywhere and confuse the hell out of everybody else. Which is how it should be, dammit! (John Oliver)



Bob Dylan 1966-1978: After The Crash (Chrome Dreams)

A stoner's dream, a history sub rosa of the rock press and the gestalt behind the music disguised as an examination of a major literary and cultural icon. The magical mystery tour begins at a time when releases by major talents were considered significant events, and carefully proceeds to the dawn of the modern day - circa 1980 - when “product” and “packaging” replaced the notion of the long player as work of art and sociological statement. Ironically, this transmogrification

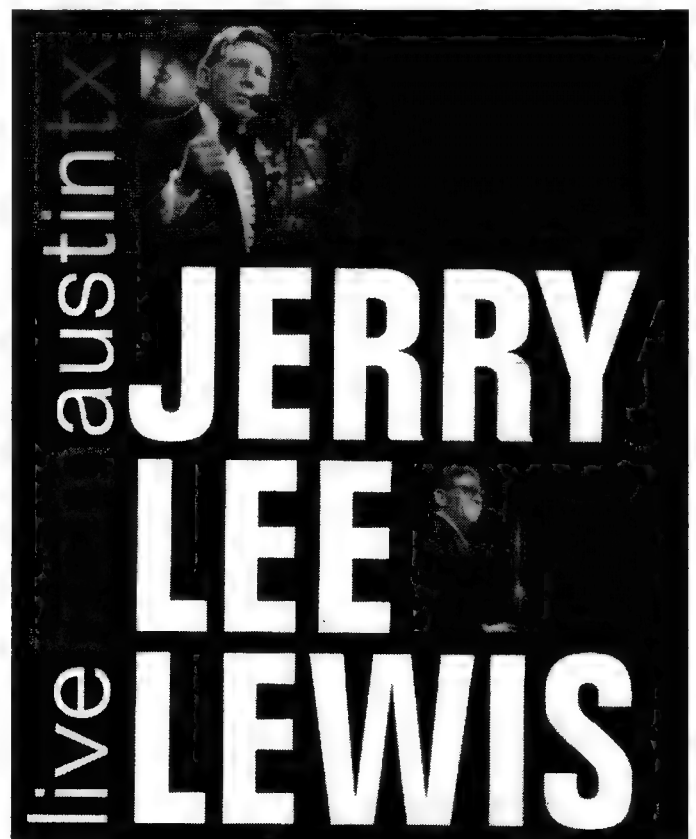


misunderstood. Those coming to this, most likely know Dylan fairly well and so for them, and for us, the most interesting portion of this two hour documentary will most likely be the attempts to throw some light on Dylan's most fallow period, that stretch which resulted in *Nashville Skyline*, *Self Portrait* and, a bit later, *Planet Waves*. These disappointments receive little attention today; nevertheless, it's fascinating to watch Dylan wrestle with writer's block while Proteus-like, he continues to experiment, reinvent himself (often high on speed), and lose himself in automatic writing experiments, e.g., the unreadable novel *Tarantula*. (Dom Salemi)

Jerry Lee Lewis - Live from Austin, TX (New West)

Jerry Lee Lewis, his country career on the decline, garnered some much-needed exposure on this superior 1983 "Austin City Limits" appearance. Augmenting his road band of Joel Schumaker, Bill Strom, and Kenny Lovelace with legendary Nashville session players

appears to have been affected by Dylan himself using his motorcycle accident in Woodstock, New York as an excuse to remove himself from the public stage. You've got to read between the lines to see this, and you have to pay careful attention (dope helps), but the revelation will come, despite the fact that nothing other than incidental music graces our ears, nor that opinions and insights from major players and critics drop upon us. Moreover, *After the Crash* is something of a misnomer; we start there, but we conclude with Bobby doing a St. John of the Cross and converting to Christianity. That's a lot of ground, and not all of it merits attention. Especially the masterworks like *Blood on the Tracks*, *John Wesley Harding*. Great art is seamless; it need not be explained, only experienced. What you want are the nuts and bolts concerning a great artist's struggle and failure, relative or complete, to create something interesting and accessible. Or



Buddy Harman and Bob Moore, Lewis laid down a strong, engaging set finally released on both CD and DVD.

Determined to demonstrate his musical diversity, Lewis mixed honky tonk hits a la "I'll Find it Where I Can" and "39 and Holding" with bluesy takes on "C.C. Rider" and "No Headstone on My Grave." Exceedingly gracious, the former Waxahatchie Bible School student even asked the audience's permission to sing an old gospel favorite, "In the Garden." Although his voice was not the golden instrument he possessed during the late 60s/early 70s, he delivered each song as if it were his own private truth.

As an old school rocker, Lewis had few equals in a live setting. Indeed, his masterful renditions of "Keep My Motor Running" and "Teenage Queen" prove far superior to the ones cut for MCA. Further, the Ferriday Fireball smoked through versions of "Sweet Little Sixteen," "What'd I Say," and his last number one country hit, the Grammy-nominated "Chantilly Lace." By the time he hammered into "Great Balls of Fire" and "Whole Lotta Shakin' Goin' On," segments of the normally sedate Austin studio audience were on their feet.

The guitar lines are better mixed on the CD, but every piano stab is brilliantly recorded in both formats. Lewis himself was far more intense a few weeks later when he toured England. (One particularly fine show resides on *Jerry Lee Lewis Live* on CBS/Fox.) Not long after, MCA dropped Lewis and his life and career - really the same thing - began to spiral into a fringe orbit.

So, for all intents and purposes, this completely enjoyable set chronicles the Killer's last days as a perennial major label act. (Ken Burke)

Amebix - No Sanctuary (Alternative Tentacles)

For Amebix, a minimalist punk band from Bristol in the United Kingdom, living well is not the best revenge, as that is simply an impossibility. The few control the many, and



said many are all lambs willingly being led to slaughter. Our parade to the abbatoir is not questioned, as our secular and religious leaders tell us that this is as it should be. Life being nasty, brutish, and short after all. Or something like that. A lyric sheet is provided, but with enraged shouts and tortured screams substituted for traditional vocalizing, it's impossible to discern whether the "singer" is sticking to the script. This forces the music, such as it is, to carry these rather jejune preoccupations. Surprisingly, it does; the compositions are dark and forebidding, bass-heavy, often brutally cacophonous, dramatically and effectively inchoate at times, and suffused with expressive power and passion. These recordings, made by a bunch of glue-sniffing, impoverished kids while squatting in abandoned flats, were spat out over twenty-five years ago. It started an anarchist scene of sorts in England, ultimately proving an inspiration to scores of bands worldwide, including Seuptura, Celtic Frost, and Neurosis. Available now on a single disc for the first time, and carefully remastered by Jello Biafra and George Horn, one ignores these recordings at one's peril. To do so is to pass up the opportunity to experience the full and ripe sound of youth tasting existence. What matter the discovery that the first few bites of the apple contain little more than worms and rot? (Dom Salemi)

Legends of American Music: Jerry Lee Lewis - A Half Century of Hits (Time Life)

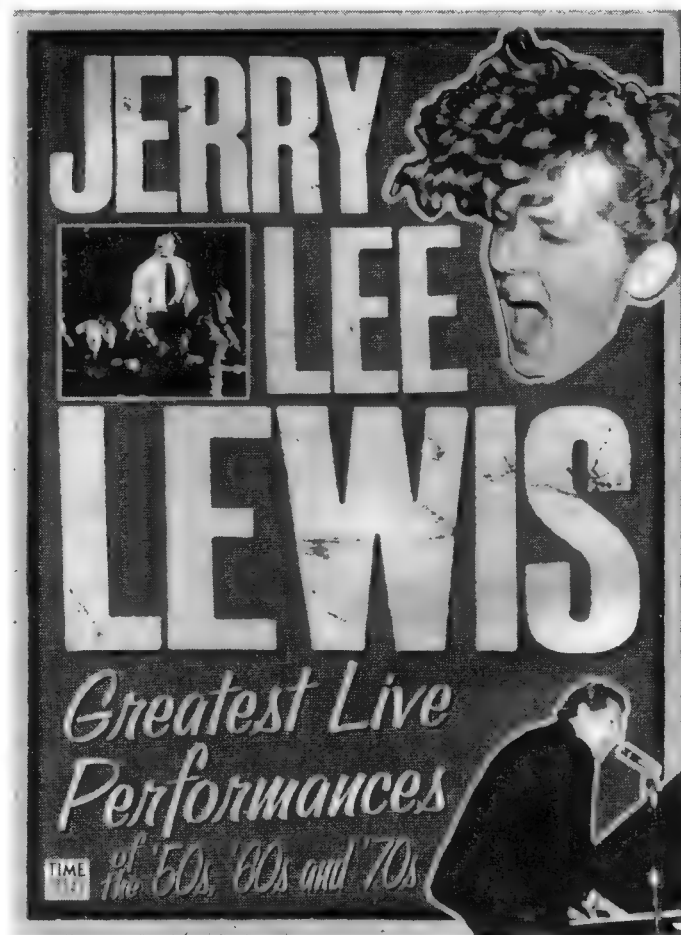
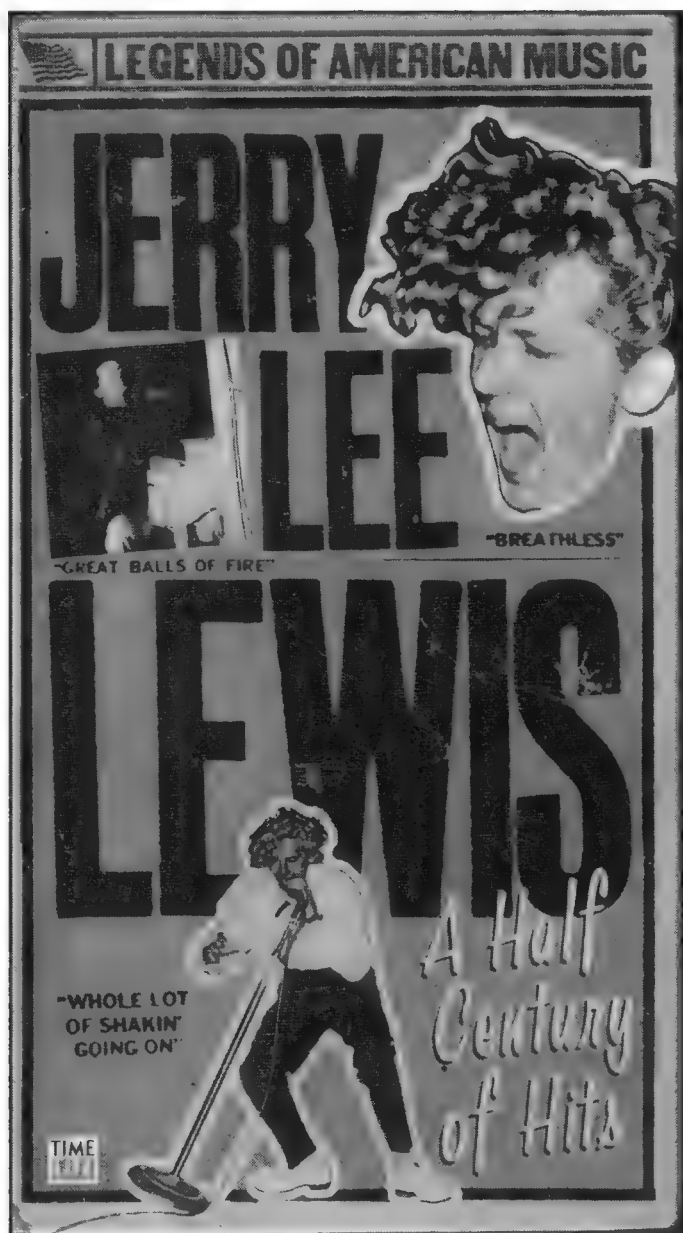
The faltering career of Jerry Lee Lewis received a potent boost from the star-studded LP *Last Man Standing*, but most newbies will prefer this three-disc, sixty-six-song set of burning rock hits, remarkable country ballads, and illuminating rarities.

Lewis's best 50s moments are compiled on disc one, including such enduring smashes as "Whole Lotta Shakin' Going On," "Breathless," "High School Confidential," and "What'd I Say." Fans seeking psychological insight into the Louisiana-born piano-pumper's creative

motivations will be thrilled by the religious argument between former Pentecostal ministry student Lewis and secular-minded Sun Records' honcho Sam Phillips. "How can the devil save souls," he asked before shouting, "Man, I have the devil in me! If I didn't, I'd be a Christian." Believing fully that he would go to Hell for doing so, the singer cut his greatest record, "Great Balls of Fire."

After the piano-pumper's much documented fall from grace, the multi-genre genius continued to conjure irrepressibly wild performances ("Big Legged Woman," "Real Wild Child," "Little Queenie") that either didn't sell or remained unreleased until the '70s. Indeed, his regular forays into country music, including country-politan renditions of "Invitation to Your Party" and "One Minute Past Eternity," eventually surfaced as Top Ten hits.

As unquenchably spontaneous as he was, it is often overlooked that Lewis got better as his career progressed. His finest mature works



came via a string of Jerry Kennedy-produced country hits contained on disc two, beginning with "Another Place, Another Time," "What Made Milwaukee Famous," and "She Even Woke Me Up To Say Goodbye." Contrasting his pure honky-tonk instincts with blues-drenched phrasing, the Killer transformed both rockers ("Meat Man," "Chantilly Lace") and aching country songs alike ("Middle Aged Crazy," "There Must Be More to Love Than This") into living, breathing audio chapters of his life.

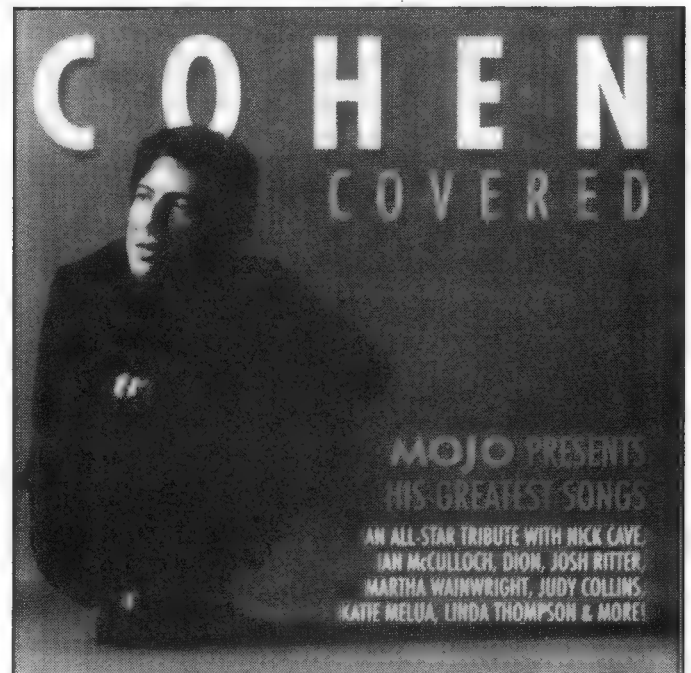
Disc three documents the downhill years. Lewis made one genuinely fine album for Elektra (1978) and enjoyed a final volley of country hits, i.e., "Thirty Nine and Holding" and "Over the Rainbow." However, bad behavior and declining sales resulted in the Killer being booted off two major labels by the mid-80s. (Jimmy Bowen openly brags about doing so in his autobiography.) The Meat Man's belated return for Sire, in 1995, best represented by the boogieing "Down the Road Apiece" and touching Jimmie Rogers cover "Miss the Mississippi and You," displayed ageless emotional command, but by then, the rock pioneer's commercial clout had completely dissipated.

This is not a perfect set. None of Lewis' MCA recordings are represented, and many of his finest Mercury hits ("Touching Home," "She Still Comes Around," etc.) are missing. However, longtime fans will deem it essential because of the live tracks and previously unreleased recordings scattered throughout. Most amazing are the two demos cut at Sound Booth in 1952, when he was only seventeen. Whether interpolating falsetto pleas into the Lefty Frizzell oldie "Don't Stay Away 'Til Love Grows Cold," or stomping manically through "New Orleans Boogie," the youngster confidently foretold his entire musical future. That alone makes this compilation worth purchasing. (Ken Burke)

Various - Cohen Covered (Mojo Magazine)

We won't bemoan the fact that you have

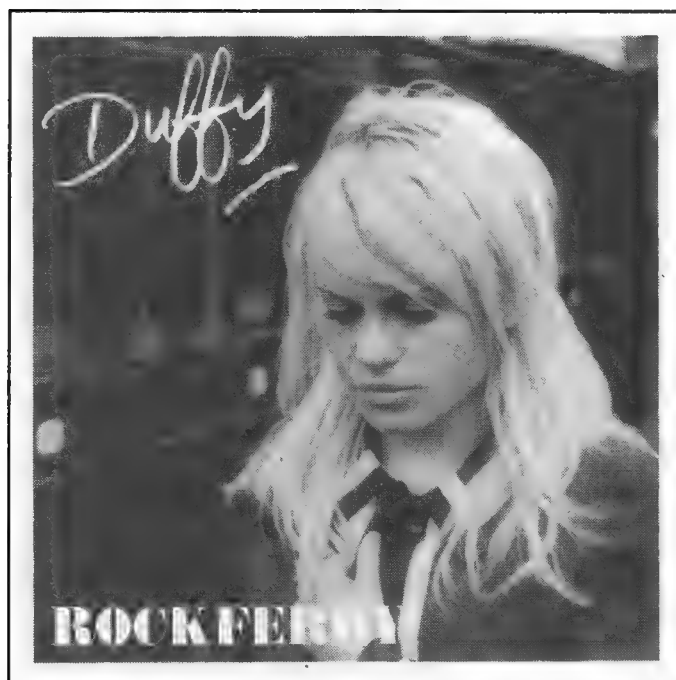
to buy the fucking magazine to get this most excellent fifteen-track compact disc. Nor will we grieve that three of these cuts were recorded exclusively for Mojo, including "Suzanne" performed by Ian McCulloch of Echo and the Bunnymen fame, and so are unavailable elsewhere. Neither will we complain that of the three hundred-plus covers of Leonard's songs available, the folks at Mojo chose to append Claudine Longet's goofy and wrongheaded erotic take on "Hey, That's No Way To Say Goodbye." (We note, as an aside, that Claudine certainly knows how to say, "Goodbye." One need only ask poor Spider Sabich's family for confirmation of that fact.) No, our jeremiad concerns the relative impossibility of interpreting Cohen's songs. Don't get us wrong, no one writes more beautiful and poetic lyrics than Leonard Cohen. Not Dylan. Not Tom Waits. Not Screaming Lord Sutch. Nobody. That does not mean, however, that for all the sublimity and artifice inherent in the work, that the compositions yield themselves up to ready interpretation. No, the meanings of even something as apparently straightforward as "Story of Isaac," is as old as the words which have shaped it. Like all true poets, Cohen has been dead many times, and has learned the secret of the grave, and has been a diver in



many seas, and so keeps the fallen day about him. One can touch the perfect body of any of his lyrics with your mind; still, you'll only skim the surface. Best then to just dip in and "Seize," as Patti Smith says (would that she were here), "the possibilities." The best and the bravest do just that. Allison Crowe allows herself to languorously float away in the effulgent melliflence of "Joan of Arc." Martha Wainwright stakes a claim to "Tower of Song" as a country weeper, perhaps inspired by Cohen's reference to Hank Williams early on in the piece. Dion uses that stoned-innate voice of his to sing through "Sisters of Mercy." Nick Cave, being a force apparently larger than life, channels Christ Himself for a chillingly chiliastic deconstruction of "Avalanche." (Dom Salemi)

Duffy – Rockferry (Mercury) Lulu – Something To Shout About (Rev-Ola)

Aimee Duffy is one of the biggest singing stars in the world now, recognized as either the new Dusty Springfield or the new Amy Winehouse (depending on who you talk to) throughout Great Britain. *Rockferry*, her debut album, is a fabulous piece of pop music,

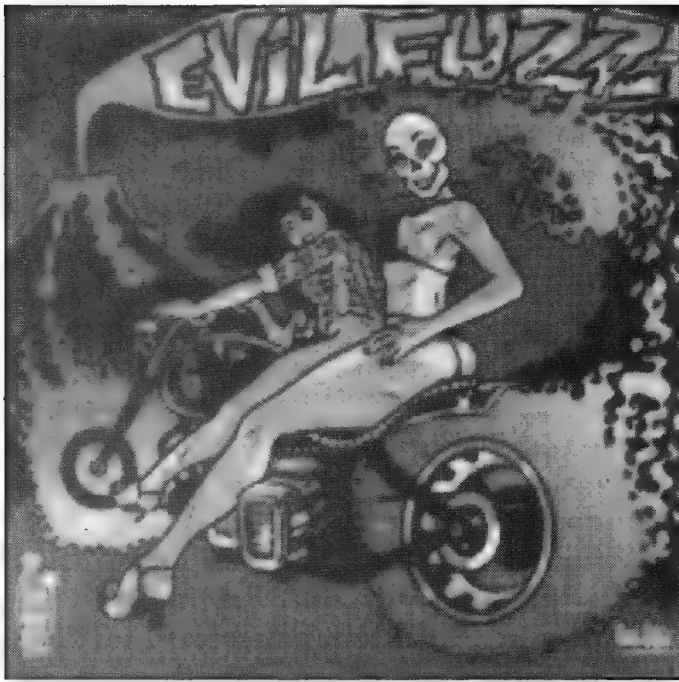


boasting four singles, two of which (title track and "Mercy") may be my favorite singles of 2008. "Mercy," a direct descendant of soul classic "Chain of Fools," also represents the first UK #1 hit by a Welsh female singer in over twenty-five years. Her album, produced by ex-Suede guitarist Bernard Butler, sounds great – which it certainly should, having taken four years to make.

While I can see the basis for comparing her to either Dusty or Ms. Wino-house, I think a better comparison might be to Scottish 60s singing sensation Lulu, especially in light of the song "Rockferry," which sounds quite a bit like Lulu's "To Sir With Love." Rev-Ola just re-released Lulu's pre-Mickey Most recordings from 1963-65, when she was fifteen to seventeen years old and had her backing band The Luvvers. While "To Sir" is Lulu's best known recording this side of the Atlantic, she's still fondly remembered in the UK for her ferocious take on the Isley Brothers' "Shout," a Top Ten hit in April 1964. The material on this new compilation CD was, in my opinion, her best work. Mickey Most, for some reason, significantly toned down her voice – described in the liner notes here as "a fishwife's roar." The highlights of this new release are, of course, "Shout," "I'll Come Running Over," "Try To Understand" (a Sawyer-Burton song), a great take on the Rolling Stones' "Surprise Surprise" (released as a B-side), and a version of Bert Russell's "Here Comes The Night," which pre-dates the hit version by Them and Van Morrison. Her band The Luvvers included a very young James Dewar on bass and backing vocals, later of Stone The Crows and Robin Trower's 70s band. While Lulu's later hits were fine, to me they don't compare to her earliest work. This and the new Duffy CD are both very highly recommended. (John Oliver)

Various - Evil Fuzz (OmOm)

Words, words, words, what needest thou of words when one speaketh of a twenty-four track tribute disc to Davie Allan? Verily, an



Theme,” Date Bait’s haunting yet menacing perambulations in a “Dark Alley,” and the Insect Surfer’s seemingly suicidal joust with the Rosetta Stone for the Allan aesthetic “Cycle-Delic.” (Dom Salemi)

Roy Orbison - The Soul of Rock and Roll (Orbison Records / Legacy)

Generous helpings of Roy Orbison’s vast catalog of rockabilly, classic pop, country, and flat out rock’n’roll are supplemented with rare recordings, private jams, and previously unreleased demos in this genuinely satisfying four CD, one hundred seven-song boxed set. In the process, the singer-songwriter’s evolution as the ultimate troubadour of heartache is deftly showcased.

Disc one smartly displays Orbison and his Wink Westerner’s journey from a hillbilly (“Hey! Miss Fanny”) and Norman Petty-produced pop act (“An Empty Cup and A Broken Date”), through his first commercial breakthrough as a Sun Records rockabilly (“Ooby Dooby”). In later years, Orbison decried his work for Sam Phillips, but the best tracks from this era (“Mean Little Mama,” “Problem Child”), portray him as a unique rocker who could growl with seductive authority.



innovative guitar God who could, at once, hold a fire in his hand whilst thinking on the frosty Caucasus. An artist of genius, who, for love of man, wouldst betray, as homage, those parts giving him shape. These parts being Duane Eddy, Link Wray, and Dick Dale. Yet greater still, as the parts in sum gave us apocalyptic fuzz guitar adorned with the most tremulous of tremolos and way-out of wah wahs. A masculine, atavistic sound fleshed out with the rinky-tinks of the Farfisa and percussion as primal call to unspeakable ritual. You wouldst know Allan from “Blue’s Theme,” the whacked-out, paleolithic stomp from Roger Corman’s seminal motorcycle feature *The Wild Angels* (“We want to be free to get loaded!”) starring Peter Fonda, Nancy Sinatra, and Bruce Dern. This led to soundtracks for numerous biker and teen exploitation flicks sporting bold and brazen titles and bespeaking much promise: *Born Losers*, *Glory Stompers*, *Thunder Alley*, et al. Which, in turn, subsequently resulted in Allan ascending to six-string apotheosis. For initiates, this be not a bad place to begin (Sundazed’s *Devil’s Rumble* two-disc anthology be the better), as all here doth acquit themselves well. Special mention must needs be made of the Fuzztone’s bold and manly take on the aforementioned “Blue’s

Yet, neither the Sun tracks nor the teen-beat RCA sides ("Almost Eighteen"), show what the struggling singer-songwriter hoped to achieve as the previously unreleased demos ("Love Storm," "I Give Up," "Defeated"). These simple, keenly emoted song blueprints display Orbison's need for a sympathetic studio visionary, which he found in Fred Foster at Monument Records in 1960. As the great hits on disc two attest ("Only the Lonely," "In Dreams," "Running Scared," "Crying"), no one understood the singer's sense of romantic paranoia better. From the start, Foster skillfully augmented his heartbreaking operatic crescendos with teen r&b/pop background vocals with adult contemporary strings and a rock'n'roll rhythm section. The result was arguably the finest commercial work created by one artist during the pre-Beatles era.

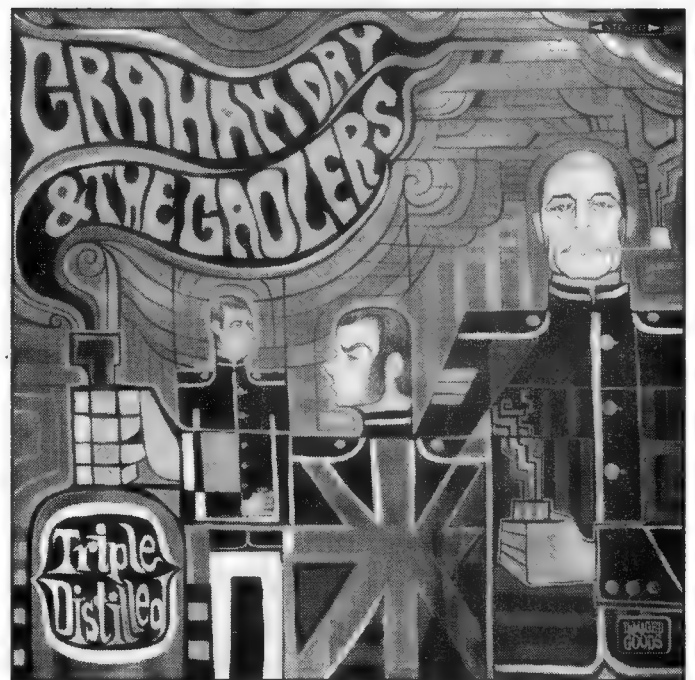
After including the last of the great Monument hits ("Mean Woman Blues," "It's Over," "Oh Pretty Woman"), disc three boils down Orbison's less successful, yet appealing, later career quite severely. Although the Big O's fans have clamored for more, only a smattering of his seldom reissued MGM sides ("Ride Away," "Too Soon to Know," "Fastest Guitar Alive"), live tracks ("Land of 1000 Dances."), and spare sides for Elektra, Monument, and Warner Bros ("That Lovin' You Feelin' Again" w/ EmmyLou Harris) are included.

Disc four documents Orbison's remarkable resurgence. Writing again for a Sun reunion project ("Coming Home"), he parlayed his stint as a member of the Traveling Wilburys ("Not Alone Anymore") and k. d. lang duet partner ("Crying") into a final shot at mainstream pop audiences. Singing in a voice that barely acknowledged the passing years, Orbison's last hot run was filled with nearly as much sexual bravado ("You Got It," "Wild Hearts Run Out of Time") and romantic desperation ("I Drove All Night") as his Monument work. It is that feeling he evokes that gives these collected works the ring of a timeless, cathartic truth.

Compleatists will probably wish that the 1980s re-recordings had been omitted in favor of more Wilbury and MGM tracks. However, the abundance on early demos, previously unreleased live tracks, crystal clear remastered sound, an informative ninety-four-page booklet, and bonus postcards transform this riveting collection into that rarest of all things - a classic American boxed set that even casual fans will savor. (Ken Burke)

Graham Day & The Gaolers – Triple Distilled (Damaged Goods Records)

I don't have a damn clue exactly where the Medway Delta is in England! I do know that tons of excellent mod-influenced garage bands have come from this area, including all of Billy Childish's bands (Thee Headcoats, Milkshakes, Buff Medways, B. Childish & the Musicians of the British Empire, etc.). While Childish is clearly the reigning garage king of this area, his first lieutenant (and one-time member of the Buff Medways) has to be Graham Day, who has also fronted or been a member of an equal array of great garage bands – The Solarflares, Planet, The Prisoners, and, most recently, Graham Day &



The Gaolers. Most, if not all of these bands, are totally unknown in this country, which is a goddamn shame. Day & The Gaolers' latest, *Triple Distilled*, is one of the very best pure rock & roll releases of 2008. Hooks a-plenty, great vocal harmonies, and incredibly catchy tunes. Check out "Pass The Whiskey" or "The Most Expensive Sleep," and you'll see what I mean. This is as good as either of The Len Price 3's two recent CDs – yet another incredibly excellent band from the Medway area, firmly in the tradition of The Who, The Creation, The Jam, and so on. What's in the water there??? (And whatever it is, can we import it here???) (John Oliver)

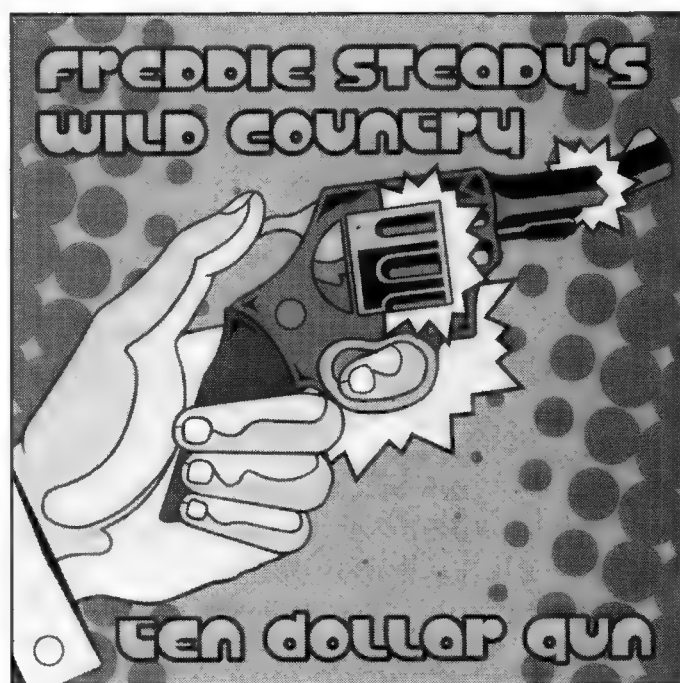
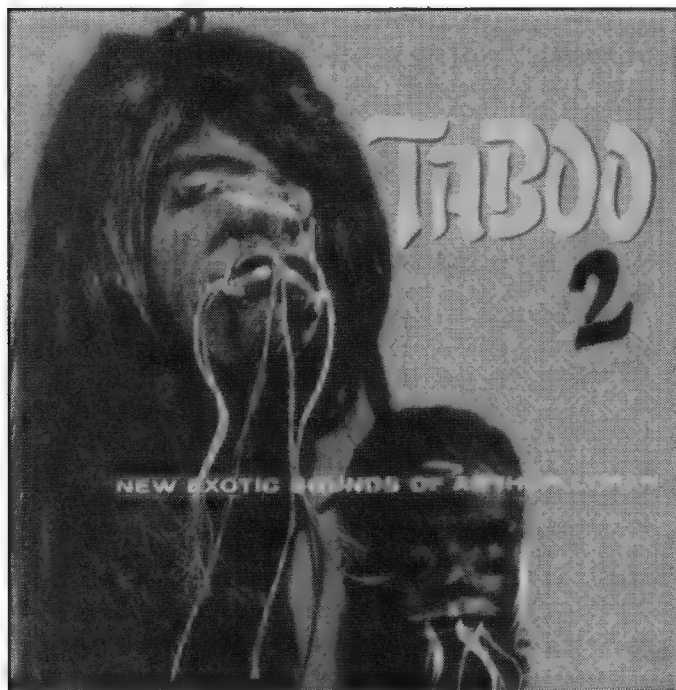
Arthur Lyman - Taboo 2 (Rykodisc)

While Martin Denny, the putative inventor of exotica musique, may *be le dernier mot* for the parvenu, most aficionados of the genre would hold that in Arthur Lyman, the vibraphonist for the aforesaid Denny, the style reached its apogee. The crux of the argument being that Lyman, who left Denny sometime around 1957, crafted a sound that, although still reeking of ersatz jungle, eschewed the commercialty of his collaborator

for a more somnolent, disquieting sound. A sound found even in the jauntiest of tunes, as with "Love Dance" (those bird calls are human, all too human) or "Mangwani Mpulele" (where congas, tambourines, and bass drums skitter off the beat and become progressively more savage). Pop *Taboo 2* - initially released in 1959 as a follow-up to the smash hit album *Taboo* - into the disc player at your next Tiki party, and despite the soft vibraphone, enticing avian cries, and exotic instrumentation, watch your guests make with the involuntary shivers. For there in their idyllic, lush, rain forest, amidst the ripple of the river and the soft sighing of the verdant trees, your party crowd hears . . . voices, soft and low, pregnant with mystery, desolation and sorrow, muttering incomprehensible words speaking from beyond the threshold of an eternal darkness.

Freddie Steady's Wild Country - Ten Dollar Gun (SteadyBoy)

In an old *Brutarian* interview with Freddie Krc, he talked about how he once took his car to a car wash in Austin, and noticed that blues, soul, tejano, rock & roll, and cajun music were all playing from different cars' radios,



and that this was something unlikely to occur anywhere but in Texas. As he has shown in *The Shakin' Apostles*, *Explosives*, *Roky Erickson & The Explosives*, *Freddie Steady Five*, and others, Freddie has fully absorbed all the music he has heard throughout his life, to the point where he makes Texas music. Sometimes it has a bit more psychedelic or rockabilly or pop or blues tinges to it, but it's all Texas music. Doug Sahm summarized it best, "You just can't live in Texas unless you have a lot of soul." Freddie, who oozes this Texas soul, recently returned to the UK to make his second CD with Freddie Steady's *Wild Country*, his C&W band. Kind of ironic, going from Texas to the UK to make country music, but who can argue with the results? A great bunch of country tunes by Freddie, including re-takes on the *Shakin' Apostles'* "Wild Wild West," the Freddie Steady Five's "What's So Hard About Love?" and "Pirate For Your Love," and "You Gotta Take That Girl" (a Powell St. John/13th Floor Elevators tune, I believe.). As in the case of *Lucky 7*, *Wild Country's* first album, Freddie uses singer-songwriter Wes McGhee and pedal steel legend B.J. Cole to great advantage on the new disc. Yet another top shelf release from Mr. Krc. Only wish I could have gone to Austin last October (just a month after I was there for the Power Pop Weekend), to see Freddie's *Wild Country* performing these tunes live! (I did see two acoustic shows he did with Bill Browder of the great country-rock band *Denim*, but that's another story!) (John Oliver)

Various Artists -The Okeh Rhythm & Blues Story 1949-1957, Volume 1 (SPV)

Back in the days when *Billboard* called it "race music," the Okeh label was a pioneering force for r&b. Many of the best swing, jazz, and rhythm artists flocked to the label because they had a reputation for great crossover sounds and - after their post-WWII resurrection - enjoyed the distribution muscle



of Columbia Records. This twenty-six-song compilation entertainingly documents some of the music and artists that transformed the industry while paving the way for rock'n'roll.

Unlike their contemporaries at King-Federal, Aladdin, and RPM, Okeh eschewed rough and rowdy boogie for a smoother jazz-based jump sound. As a result, ditties with barroom jukebox appeal by the likes of Chris Powell & The Five Blue Flames ("Rock the Joint"), The Five Scamps ("Chicken Shack Boogie"), and Larry Darnell ("Work Baby Work"), play out like innocent pop music.

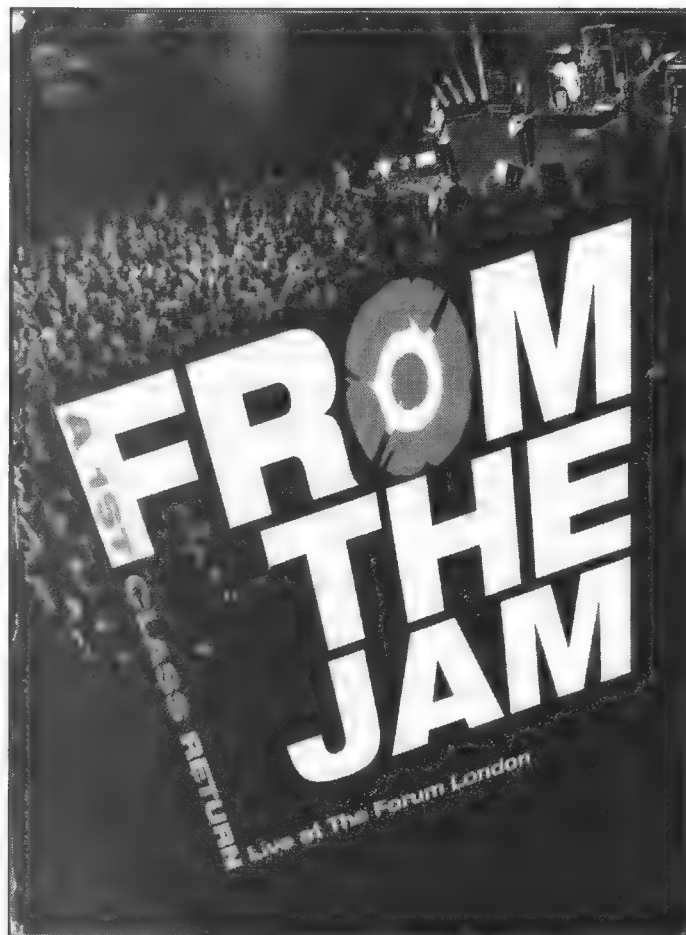
Despite the relative slickness of the playing and production, several artists bring earthy humor to their work. Indeed, the legendary Chuck Willis ("Let's Jump Tonight"), the Bill Davis Trio ("Catch 'Em Young, Treat 'Em Rough, Tell 'Em Nothin'"), and Pearl Traylor with Chuck Thomas & His All Stars ("Three Ball Sam (The Pawn Shop Man)") sound like they are slyly committing crimes against propriety.

The sound is top-notch, and Neil Slaven's booklet notes are well-researched. Those wishing to get into the label that also launched Johnny Ray's career will find this disc to be an illuminating first step. (Ken Burke)

From The Jam – A 1st Class Return – Live At the Forum London (DVD Import from Invisible Hands)

Over a year ago, my friend Kim talked me into getting us tickets to see From The Jam at the Birchmere in Alexandria, Va. I was a wee bit skeptical about this band, which consists of ex-Jam members Bruce Foxton on bass/vocals, Rick Buckler on drums, and a couple of ringers who take front-man/guitarist/singer/songwriter extraordinaire Paul Weller's place. To a lot of people, Weller IS The Jam, and nobody can ever replace him. On February 11, 2008, we hit the Birchmere to see. To immediately cut to the chase, FTJ put on an incredible live show, with the main ringer, Russell Hastings, basically turning into Paul Weller for the night, not only replicating his guitar and vocals, but really throwing himself headlong into the role! Dave Moore, a second ringer, adds keyboards, guitar, and backing

vocals, in essence doing most of the overdubs to the original records. While this ain't the Jam, it's such an incredible simulation that you probably won't care! I know we didn't that night. The band was supposed to put out a live CD and DVD, with an album of new original material (penned by Foxton and Hastings), sometime around September last year. In November, a DVD was finally released overseas of a live show from late 2007 in London. It's almost as enjoyable watching this live show as it was seeing the band last year. They do most of The Jam's UK hits here, with an ample share of album cuts from *All Mods Con* through *The Gift* (third through sixth and last studio albums). Twenty-five classic Jam tunes in all, with a bonus interview disk tossed in. No original new ground is broken here, but this is one great live band, with one hell of a back catalog that, thankfully, Weller has given his blessing for them to use. Paul has no desire to reunite with Bruce or Rick, which is a shame, considering how uneven his solo career has been. Oh well . . . (John Oliver)



Various - Innocence Is Bliss (Dionysus)



It takes guts to give yourself over to scouring the world for female, or mostly female, punk bands. No matter your credentials, or financing bona fides, the gals are gonna conclude you're on the make. So hat's off to the guy who, research tells us, has dedicated his life to proving to the world that there's more to distaff punk rock than The Runaways and The Donnas. Inside sources also tell us that the guy's girlfriend no longer drives him to his band practices or pays for the groceries, but never mind that. Ignore, too, that some of this stuff like The Cocktail Slippers (ironic take on 60s girl-group sound from Norway and refusing to interview with *Brutarian*), The Whys (psychotic surf by way of Japan), the Buttersprites (Dada pop shot from Planet Arous), ain't punk - it's still choice. The stuff that is punk or punky, interestingly enough, has been chided in some quarters for relying too much on a few simple chords, incoherent singing, and atavistic drumming. Which doesn't make much sense, as you can't even think about punk if you eschew these musical tropes. Said criticisms, which probably wouldn't have arisen if any of these bands were English. Oh wait, Zombina and the Skeletones are English. Foolishly listed, however, as American. Bad marketing ploy, that, although the Yanks do acquit themselves well here. None better than Lost Patrol, who sound like they would have been better off on an LA Paisley Underground Revival with Rain Parade and Green on Red. (Dom Salemi)

Magic Christian – Evolver (Wizard's Den)

What a great decade the 00s has been for Flamin' Groovies fans! Between Roy Loney's last two great roots-rock CDs (*Drunkard In The Think Tank* (2004) and *Shake It Or Leave It!* (2007), both on Career Records), Chris Wilson's latest (see review elsewhere in this issue), and Cyril Jordan's Magic Christian releases (eponymous debut in 04, and this new one in 08), as well as live shows aplenty by the aforementioned, we Groovies fans



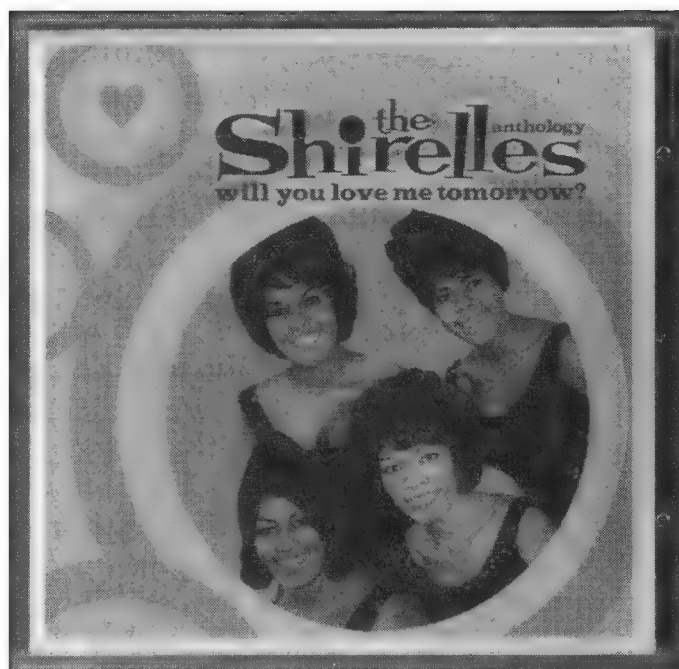
might as well have died and gone to heaven! (Not to mention the fact that Magic Christian have actually toured here in the East twice in the past five months, and will be appearing at the upcoming Ponderosa Stomp in April in New Orleans, with Cyril & Roy reunited for a full set with The A-Bones.) The new Magic Christian release *Evolver* features not only two cool covers and eight new original tunes penned by Mr. Jordan and sung by the amazing (and classically trained) Paul Kopf and Cyril, but a new rhythm section comprised of Plimsoul Eddie Munoz on bass and Clem Burke (Blondie and tons of other cool bands) on drums. The addition of the new guys has significantly improved the live sound of this excellent band, as recent shows in NYC and DC have shown. To me, it's like taking the 60s Stones and Beatles and interjecting early live Who energy – that's Magic Christian live now! And with the new rhythm section, they're also able to play out live a lot more, which is a bonus! As far as the new studio album, while it's been a long time coming (four years), the wait was worth it! A new stomping live opener (first released as a single in 04) in "Turn Up The Heat," along with its B-side ("All The Stars"), two great new tunes that sound like they may have been recorded back at Rockfield with Dave Edmunds at the board ("In Your Arms"

and “Come and Go”), two pure power poppers sung by Cyril (“Run and Hide,” “Sha La La,” and yes, that’s Cyril singing the falsetto lead!), killer Who and Beatles’ covers (“Out In The Streets,” and an “Anytime At All” that shreds the original!), the Easybeats’ “Friday On My Mind”-influenced “Tomorrow Never Comes,” and the bluesy, roadhouse closer, “The Real Thing.” Production-wise, this is a big step up from the debut CD, which seemed more like demos in places. Cyril’s writing continues to improve, as do Paul K’s vocals. With the new rhythm section, I’ll be damned if there’s a better rock & roll band out there now, which makes it frustrating as hell watching these guys play to small crowds in shithole clubs. Hey, that’s the music business nowadays and that’s sad. Hopefully, they’ll get through to enough people via these shows that it’ll make a difference. If they come anywhere near your town, you really need to see this outfit! (John Oliver)

The Shirelles Anthology - Will You Love Me Tomorrow (Castle)

The Shirelles’s catchy songs, gospel-fed harmonies, and peerless ability to voice the concerns of young womanhood ushered in pop music’s era of female empowerment. The best of their Scepter recordings joyfully reside on this highly recommended sixty-song, two-CD set.

Naturally all the big hits a la “Dedicated to the One I Love,” “Soldier Boy,” “Mama Said,” “Will You Love Me Tomorrow,” “Everybody Loves a Lover,” “Foolish Little Girl,” and “Baby It’s You” are included. Subtly remastered, they’ve never sounded better. Aided by a succession of great studio producers - Stan Green, Luther Dixon, Van McCoy, Leiber & Stoller - the Shirelles demonstrated an uncanny knack for one-upping their girl group contemporaries. Indeed such life-lesson ditties as “Voice of Experience,” “Stop the Music,” and “Hard Times” cemented their roles as the vulnerable big sisters of their



genre. Moreover, the grittier, lesser-known recordings such as the Ray Charles-flavored “Boys” and “Love is a Swingin’ Thing,” and Marvelettes-inspired “Big John,” provide the best settings for lead singer Shirley Alston’s timeless tears-behind-the-sass approach.

Mired in legal problems and commercially stunted by the British Invasion acts dominating the radio, the Shirelles wracked up minor hits with “Sha-La-La,” “Tonight You’re Gonna Fall in Love With Me,” and “Are You Still My Baby.” Although their chart clout waned, their willingness to experiment never did. Bravely mixing Spectoresque adult contemporary a la “His Lips Get in the Way” and “Thank You Baby” with justifying-my-man anthems like “Get Rid of Him” and “That Boy is Messin’ Up My Mind,” they transformed pleading teen anthems into a sexy art form.

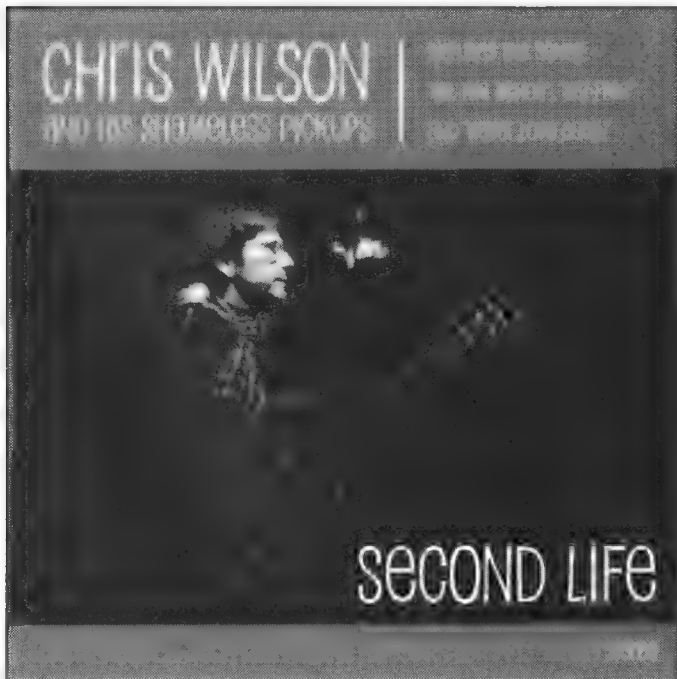
Their post-1965 work embraced trendier pop arrangements, resulting in a salsa-flavored rendition of “Que Sera Sera” and a pounding remake of their debut hit “I Met Him On a Sunday.” The soul aesthetic of the late-60s should have been a nice fit for the Shirelles. Certainly the Motownish “Don’t Go Home (My Little Darlin’),” “Look Away,” and the brassy “Last Minute Miracle” do sound great today, but by then they had been typed

as an oldies act.

The fold-out paper liner notes by Mick Patrick and Malcolm Baumgart are bolstered with chart positions and vintage pictures, and the music remains undeniably great. If you're looking for something beyond the standard greatest hits package by these undisputed girl-group queens, this is the one to get. (Ken Burke)

Chris Wilson – Second Life (Panther Studios – Import)

You know you're in for a treat when the first line of the first song of ex-Flamin' Groovie singer Chris Wilson's new album (and his first new studio effort since 1994) is – "Now all the action has been shaken..." (from "All The Action"), and the second tune is titled "Shake That Feeling." To quote Yogi Berra, "This is *déjà vu* all over again," or whatever it is that he once said. Chris has been playing live shows in Europe over the past two years, and he and his latest London-based band, The Shameless Pickups, have just recorded an excellent new album consisting of three Wilson-penned tunes, a Dylan cover ("Visions of Johanna"), and eight new songs written by Pickups' guitarist (and bassist on this

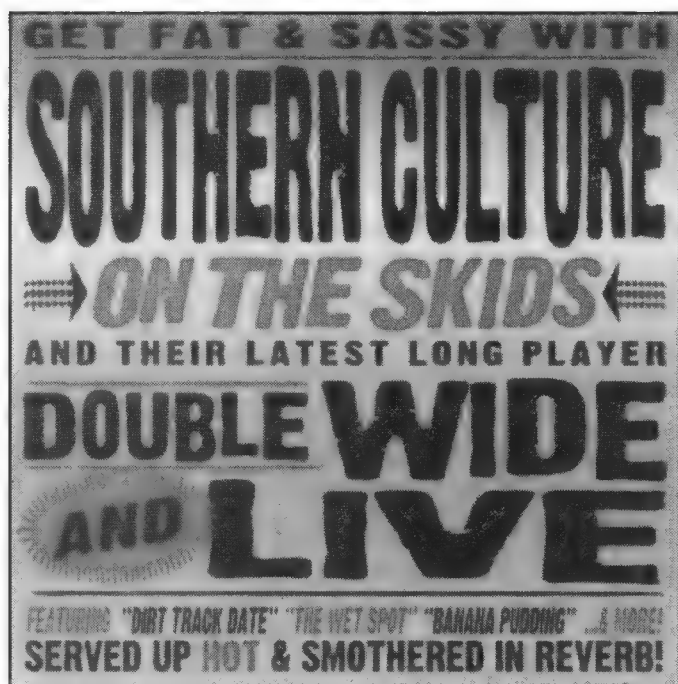


album) Anthony Clark. Does it sound like the Groovies? Somewhat in places, but to me, it sounds a lot more influenced by the likes of The Barracudas (another of Chris' ex-bands), Graham Parker, and especially Bob Dylan. My favorite tunes on this new release are at the very end - Clark's "Under The Power Lines" sounds like a souped-up "From A Buick 6," followed by the "Visions of Johanna" cover, with Chris' "While There's Life," a reworking of "Watching The River Flow" ending the album - with Wilson doing an amazing job of channeling Bobby D. circa 1966. Other highlights include the gorgeous "Never Love Again," which Chris recorded back in 1994 (Chris Wilson & The Sneetches on the Marilyn label), and which reminds me of Ray Davies' "Days," the aforementioned "All The Action"/"Shake That Feeling" openers (the former sounding like vintage Graham Parker to me), and the Barracudas-like "Set Free." During his Groovies days, Chris was always quite a versatile vocalist; while he was able to effortlessly morph into Jagger, Lennon, Mark Lindsay or McGuinn/Clark, depending on the cover they were doing, he also brought his own sound and style to the band's originals. Great to hear that his pipes are still intact, and he's still capable of making excellent music! Now, if he'd just hit this side of the Atlantic to play live, too . . . (John Oliver)

Southern Culture on the Skids - Doublewide and Live (Yep Roc)

Blessed with a remarkable command of grunge and twang, Southern Culture on the Skids exhibits more pure groove on this sixteen-song live set than any of their studio discs. Playing at a breakneck tempo, the North Carolina-based trio brilliantly blend semi-coherent psychobilly with humorous tongue-in-cheek white-trash allusions galore.

Drummer Dave Hartman, bassist/vocalist Mary Huff, and lead singer and guitarist Rick Miller, achieve a full sound that makes them appear larger than they actually are.



At the heart of everything is Miller's guitar work, which alternately echoes surf-master Dick Dale ("The Wet Spot," "69 El Camino," "Meximelt"), the ominous fuzztone of Link Wray ("Mojo Box"), and sly syncopation of Slim Harpo ("Ditch Diggin"). Further, his funny, country-laced lyrics ("Whole Lotta Things," "Cheap Motels") play out like a mythical meeting of the Bonzo Dog Doo Dah Band and the Cramps.

Unfortunately, some of Miller's clever wordplay gets lost due to some seriously undermiked vocals ("Liquored Up," "Doublewide"). This particularly affects Huff ("Hittin' on Nothing" whose thin, sassy voice can barely be heard above SCOTS powerful rhythm section ("Just How Lonely"). Admittedly, that flaw is a vital aspect of their heart-pumping, caffeinated attack, the execution of which makes this set great fun. (Ken Burke)

Pirate Love – Black Vodoun Space Blues (Voodoo Rhythm)

From Oslo, Norway, Pirate Love eschews the route taken by so many of the recent Scandinavian bands of aping the more successful 70s-influenced Swedish/Norwegian



acts like Turbonegro, The Hellacopters, Backyard Babies, etc. These guys go a bit further back, roots-wise, to The Sonics, Stooges, Johnny Thunders, and trashy LA garage bands like The Seeds, along with rockabilly and surf music. The result? Just what we've come to expect from the most excellent Voodoo Rhythm Records – noisy, screechy, loud, and distorted rock & roll music, the kind that makes you wanna break things or get violent, not dance, the kind that will empty the room in most parties in polite society. The new CD features several of the tunes from the band's excellent debut EP from 2007 *Death Surf Negro Spirituals*. Ya gotta love a band that put out an EP with that name, no? Highly recommended. (John Oliver)



**Stiff - Mary Roach
(2003) W. W. Norton &
Company**

Beware those of you planning on donating your body to science, for after reading *Stiff*, a study of the "curious lives of human cadavers," you may find yourself second-guessing your munificence. Well, maybe not, as one shouldn't, as a practical matter, give two shits about what happens to their mortal coil after it has been shuffled off. Nevertheless, even the most jaded and cynical reader is likely to find him or herself shocked - and hopefully, amused - by former *Salon* columnist Mary Roach's short history of the

use and misuse of the Dead. The author, tongue firmly in cheek as it is throughout so much of this, informs us that the reason for undertaking this project was to give the public a close and personal view of the "notable achievements made while dead." A bit of misdirection, that, especially when detailing the way in which corpses are used as crash-test dummies or employed to test the efficacy of the latest military hardware. And in looking on from the pearly gates - hopefully - do you think you'd honestly be able to say, as your severed head was being mutilated by a doctor in an effort to perfect his plastic surgery techniques, that your now superannuated bean was significantly advancing the cause of anything other than human vanity?

We discover less respectful things done in the name of science as we move through the book. The University of Tennessee Medical Center scatters corpses throughout a carefully landscaped park, allowing them to rot until they liquefy so as to gain a better understanding of decay. Supposedly, the study of various states of decomposition advances the science of criminal forensics. Yeeeeeech! There must be, simply has to be, a more decorous way of acquiring knowledge in the field. Kudos to Ms. Roach for not befouling her clogs while traipsing about the noisome and putrescent Knoxville grove.

Yeah, we've made it to the 21st Century, but how far have we really come? Man may have found a way to turn human bodies into compost, but is this, as efficacious as it might be, a civilized development? Something one would consider at a far remove from grave robbing and leeching?

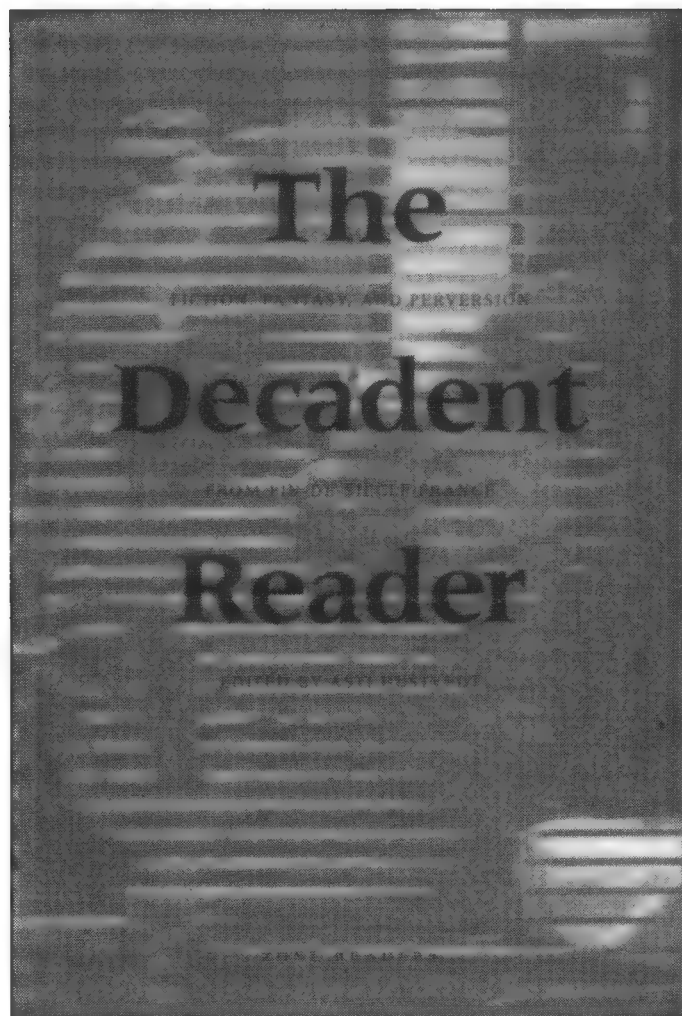
Your expensive college education screams at you for being so hidebound. Then you get to the chapter about head transplants. You read, in growing horror, that this technology involves lowering the body into a vat of liquid nitrogen and frozen, whereupon it is detached and placed in a separate chamber where ultrasound waves shatter the now freeze-dried corpse into little itty-bitty pieces the "size of ground chuck." Oh, the humanity!

The humanity! Death, here is not thy sting, but rather an outrage of cosmic proportions.

Little wonder that Roach's husband, after finishing the book, refused to let her complete the willed-body form. Can't say I blame him; after all, what manner of man, other than a necrophiliac, would willingly consign his wife's future remains to a class of individuals who look on the human body as little more than a plaything? (Dom Salemi)

The Decadent Reader - ed. Asti Hustvedt (1998) Zone Books

The *Decadent Reader*, a hefty anthology weighing in at over one thousand pages, is a must for aspiring Francophiles. This voluminous enterprise aims to please the hardcore intellectual and the polymorphous reader by serving up a stylish selection of



naughty text accompanied by healthy doses of literary criticism. The anthology, edited by Asti Hustvedt, offers translated works by, among others, Jules Barbey d'Aureville, Rachilde, J.K. Hysmans, Jean Moreas, Guy de Maupassant, and Jean Lorrain - writers who earned their *fin-de-siecle* reputations as decadents by ridiculing France's moral majority and its cherished institutions: church, state, and family.

Since the anthology's material has languished for most of a century, the interpolation of Crit. and Lit. provides the uninitiated with the necessary historical background, but it also reminds us that we need to work for our pleasures. Some of this labor comes from the baroque concepts that are the crowing glory of French theory, which, like a gaudy jewel, alienates folks who value straight talk. But straight talk, or the lack thereof, is precisely the point: decadents don't talk straight. If we are going to appreciate their excesses, provocations, and formidable taste in clothing and decor, then we need to understand that their queer talk is a special kind of language.

The decadents worshipped artificiality; they cultivated the aristocratic, anti-naturalistic style described by Verlaine as "all glistening with purple." In Maupassant's "A Divorce Case," for example, the lawyer argues that his client's safety is in danger because her husband suffers from "poetic madness," a reference no doubt to Plato who famously wrote about the deleterious effects of bad poetry. Introducing the husband's diary into evidence, counsel proceeds to read a selection of memorable ravings:

Oh! flesh, seductive living dun, walking putrefaction, a mass that thinks, speaks, looks, and smiles, full of fermenting food, rosy, pretty, tempting, deceitful as is the soul . . .

This ode to excrement is Maupassant's delicate way of saying that we are all full of shit, but it is also typical of the decadents' horror of vulgarity. Although they celebrated

every form of moral corruption, they never engaged in coarse language, which made them the unrivaled masters of euphemism in their day.

For some, *Decadence* might prove tough going, but I personally like an occasional reprieve from the hard-boiled posturing of 20th Century *fin-de-siecle* sex-and-crime stories. In fact, the flamboyant prose of Huysmans and friends generated considerable scandal in part because, as Francoise Meltzer points out, they were objects of bourgeois homophobia. Many of them, including those who did not come from aristocracy, took considerable pleasure in emulating the education, values, and sexual proclivities of blue-blooded libertines. Barbey, whose texts read like treatises on dandyism, "would spend hours each day on his appearance, elaborately styling, and later dyeing his hair and applying makeup." Lorrain was a follower of the literary Satanists who liked to wear perfume and paint their nails. Moreas was "known to be arrogant and vain, a dandy who would dress only in white, with the exception of brightly-colored ties." Because dandyism was class-specific, sexual transgression represented an unorthodox attack on the idea that political and social change equaled progress. But we are no longer masters in our own homes, laments the dying Comtesse de Savigny in Barbey's "Happiness in Crime." Her melancholy speech sums up the decadent position that the aristocracy was in every way superior to the bourgeoisie who might have money but no breeding or sense of style.

Female dandyism, on the other hand, was less common and more disrespectful of the old hierarchies, which may explain why Janet Teizer has such difficulty positioning Rachilde in her maddeningly coy introduction to "Monsieur Venus." Thankfully, the anthology contains short-but-useful biographies on each of the writers. Marguerite Eymery or Rachilde, we learn, was an only child who earned her father's affection by trying to make him forget that she was a girl. At twenty-one, she moved to Paris, where she convinced the

police to let her appear in public dressed as a man. She became increasingly disillusioned in her old age and reputedly cared more for her pet rats than her family and friends. A self-professed anti-feminist, Rachild resented the burden of bearing children. In "Monsieur Venus" she writes:

I represent the elite of women of our time. A combination of the feminine artist and the feminine great lady, one of those women who revolt at the idea of carrying on a weak race. or of giving a pleasure they don't share.

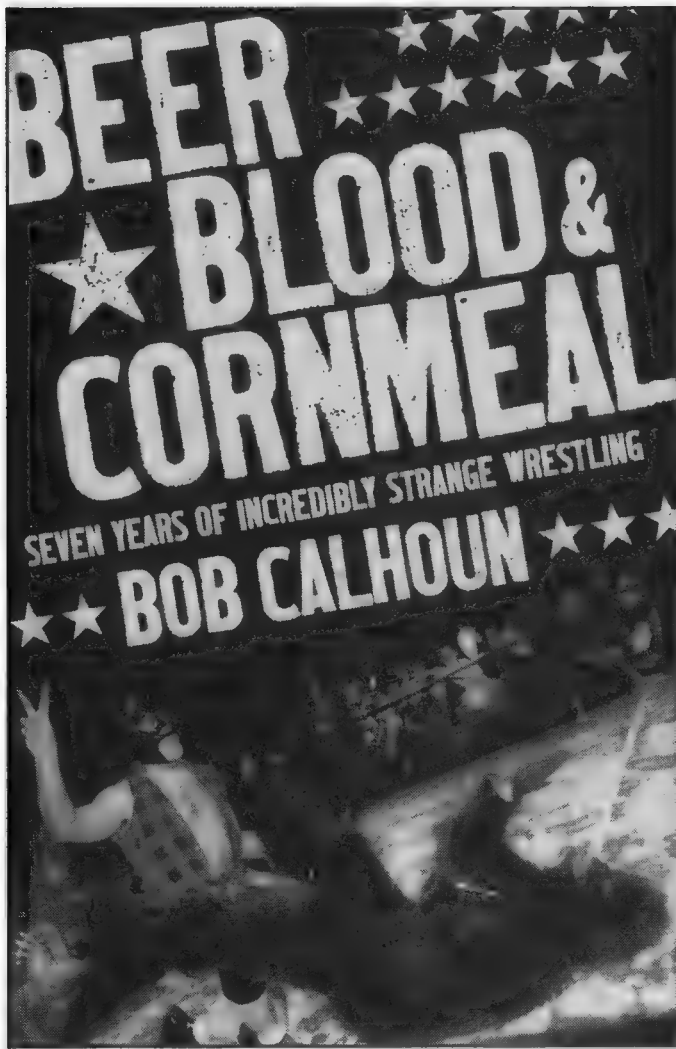
Strangely, the life and crimes of Rachilde's literary mentor do not figure largely in *The Decadent Reader*. The Marquis de Sade, who penned the most irreverent, salacious, and tedious works ever to elicit controversy and opprobrium, deserves more than a passing mention as there isn't a decadent not owing him a huge debt: the theatricality of closeted spaces, the props and fetishism, the declaration of erotic rights are all expressly Sadian. To learn more about the Divine Marquis, I recommend Francine du Plessix Gray's *At Home with the Marquis de Sade*, though the more encyclopedic *A History of Private Life*, edited by Michelle Perrot, also gets the job done.

Sade teaches us something essential about sex, which is that we never get tired of talking about it. The decadents were more than willing to keep the discourse going. As Michel Foucault would say, they were some of history's great "sexual sermons": denouncing the status quo, chastising hypocrisy, and castigating prudishness. If we no longer question the centrality of sex in our lives, its power and influence over our personal fulfillment, we need only to read the decadents to find out why. (Dr. K.A. Kopple)

Headpress Guide to the CounterCulture - eds. Temple Drake & David Kerekes (2005) Headpress

Alright, imagine *Brutarian* with a staff of two dozen, highly-literate, extremely sophisticated, debauched intellectuals, and you have some idea of what Britain's leading *outré* underground publication is all about. Irreverently referring to itself as the *dernier mot* on sex, religion, and death, *Headpress* makes no attempt to disguise the fact that this, not-so-loosely translated, means blanket coverage of all the things the dissolute live for: eldritch music, obscene pornography, obscure film, true crime stories, conspiracy theories, and transgressive publications. Drake and Kerekes deem this a sourcebook; in reality, it's really a cherry picking of the more well-written and incisive reviews from issues thirteen through twenty-four of the magazine, just about the time the brilliant and visionary Mr. Kerekes assumed control. What Kerekes did, pace *Amok* and *Re/Search* and *Loompanics*, was to assert that "alternative" had little to do with the money invested in it. That is to say, impoverished production did not necessarily equate with quality.

In *epatering* the essentially bourgeoisie sensibilities of the underground publishing houses, Kerekes made it fashionable for the independent press to take closer looks at coffee table books, Hollywood movies, and mainstream artists. Which in turn, gave greater cachet to *Headpress* continuing and expanding its coverage of carnival and trash kulchur. Kitsch, lowbrow, highbrow, and everything in between suddenly became fair game for review. Baudelaire rubbed elbows with Bava, and it was good. It was, and still is, an impressive balancing act, and one which, thankfully, shows no signs of wavering. If you're unfamiliar with Kerekes and company, let this guide serve as introduction, as entrance to a world far beyond any you have imagined in your fevered little imagination. (Dom Salemi)



Beer, Blood & Cornmeal: Seven Years of Incredibly Strange Wrestling - Bob Calhoun (2008)
ECW Press

In all my trips to San Francisco from the mid 90s through about 2003 or so, I was never able to coordinate the work I was sent there to do in my agency's regional office with music shows I wanted to see (my first priority . . . after work, of course) and Incredibly Strange Wrestling shows. I had heard about these bizarre events – combinations of punk rock shows with bands like NOFX, The Dickies, Fear, and Deadbolt, with their sets preceded and followed by pro rasslin' matches, featuring wrestlers with names like El Pollo Diablo, Harley Racist, the Ku Klux Clown, El Homo Loco, Macho Sasquatcho, Uncle NAMBLA

(who always seemed to be fighting a Little Timmy), The Cruiser, Poontangler, The Abortionist, and Count Dante, the Deadliest Man Alive. I really wanted to catch one of these shows - per the publications that take pro wrestling seriously (and think about that statement for just a second!), this was the most godawful shit in the world, with the promotion's larger shows (usually with catchy titles like Homomania) always getting voted the worst shows of the year by *Wrestling Observer* or *Torch* readers. Mention was made of attendees of ISW shows being given tortillas to throw at the wrestlers – not exactly the same as the “bring your own weapons to the arena” shows in the Philly-based Extreme Championship Wrestling (ECW), but it's original!

SF journalist Bob Calhoun, who was also known as Count Dante in ISW, has written an absolutely hilarious book from a true insider's view about his wrestling days and the history of this short-lived promotion/company, which was started by Johnny Legend (LA rockabilly legend and movie director) and music promoter/band manager Audra Morse. Early on, Ms. Morse ran Mr. Legend out of SF (and back to LA, where he and his sister, former *Brutarian* interviewee Lynne Margulies, occasionally promote wrestling events), and proceeded to run ISW with an iron hand, and judging from the photos in this book, I'm guessing she could have probably beaten the shit out of any of her wrestlers! The promotion started out in the Transmission Theater in the then-trashy South of Market area (SOMA), and through word of mouth, grew to the point where they put on shows in the Fillmore and promoted events on the Van's Warped Tour in 2001. Their shows were known for bringing in local celebrities like James Hetfield (Metallica) and Jello Biafra (Dead Kennedys, ex-Mayoral candidate), as well as the usual assortment of weirdos, crackpots, and ne'er-do-wells in San Francisco. Starting out as a supposedly legitimate brand of Mexican lucha libre, ISW's booking and matches wound up being taken over by nuts like Calhoun who were

huge wrestling fans, but had very limited athletic skills, resulting in horrible matches, but interesting rasslin' characters, a large percentage of whom were either gay or wore strange animal costumes, said characters often participating in debacles such as "End of Days" matches and "Christians to the Lions" matches. Of course, nobody affiliated with the promotion knew a damn thing about business either, so they went under after seven years. The book would be worth its cost just for Calhoun's tales about the various threats he received for calling himself Count Dante (a name he took from a real-life martial artist who advertised on the backs of comic books). A great read! To quote the aforementioned Mr. Biafra, "Like music and sex, wrestling is so much more fun when it's local, no-budget, and sleazy!" (John Oliver)

Birth of the Cool - Lewis MacAdams (2001) The Free Press

M'lords and ladies of the royal court, our dearest hearts and gentlest people of the Fourth Estate would have us believe this tome to be the wiggiest, the mostest, the gassiest, the k-razzziest bit of historicism what should ever have been laid down since that carpenter kitty told all and sundry that he was . . . The Nazz. Which mayest be right and true; nevertheless, in the days and long nights of ripperty bip and bop and rada-deet-deet deet, one might have ascribed the greater genius influence to cynical Jack's, drunken Jack's, *On the Road*. Or mayhap, the cock-loving cat seeing the greatest minds of his generation reduced to the . . . *Howl*. Nay, my lords and ladies, that was a poem. It was a long one though, almost an epic, so let us allow the true hipsters to put it up for nomination. As well as let the truly disaffected put forth for hosannahs and laurels, the much libeled *Naked Lunch*. Noble causes all; yet again, we sayest, nevertheless, *Birth Of The Cool*, subtitled *Beat, Bebop, and the American Avant-garde* remains, totally . . . with it. 'Cause the man what wrote it, despite being

a world-class poet, ain't into pontificating or didactyling. No sir, my man, he's tapped in, way gone completely into the power of story.

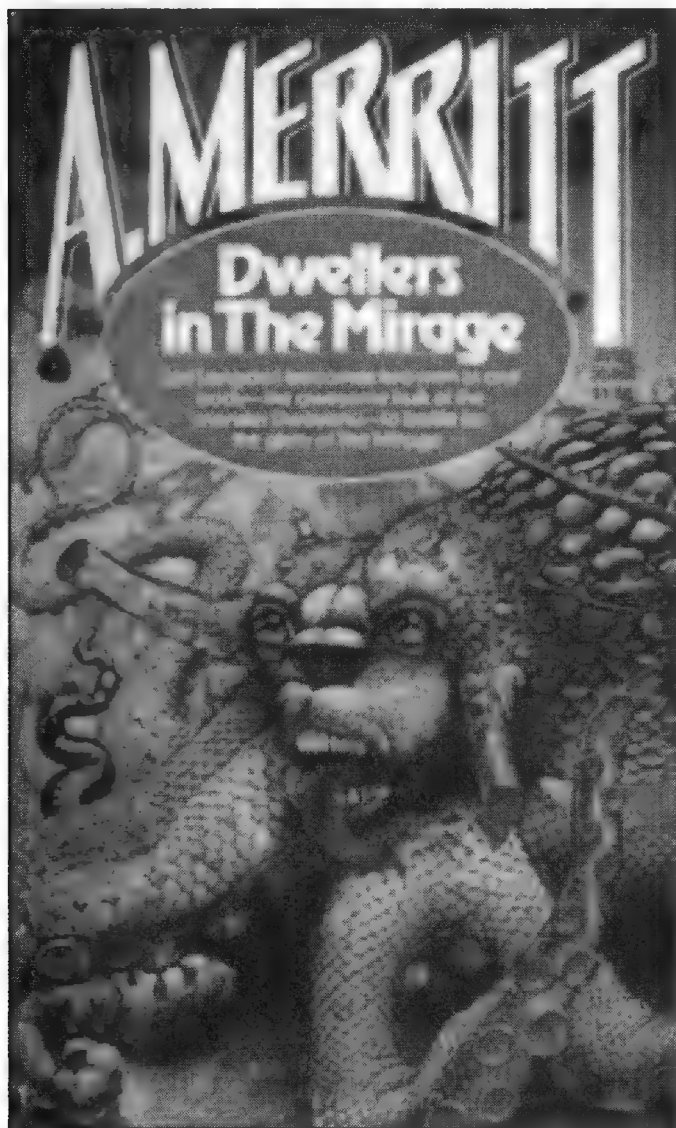
Story is the way to go. Always the way to go, if you think about it without thinking too much. Especially when you're trying to limn the entire history of the American bohemian thing from 1940 to the 1965 of The Newport Folk Festival. 'Tis a burden; yet this cat, MacAdams, tells it brilliantly, and manages, somehow, someway, to weave this magnificent tapestry. Without letting any of the seams show, you dig? In this gentle sewing session, cats and kitties, we learn the manner in which Zen Buddhism got on line and why everyone was so down with it. Why Pete Seeger rates with bold *bodhisattva* Woody Guthrie. How Thelonious Monk, as much as Miles or Bird, led bop to cool and the Jim's to jazz. What "beat" is and, most importantly, why it is not necessarily synonymous with "cool." Still, here's the lick, the true gas - it's those nutty stories: Lucien Carr's murdering, dismembering, and dumping a mentor's body parts in the East River; that wiggy Black Mountain School and their birthing of the "happening"; unbelievable-but-true tales of drugs, madness, and mayhem; and the incorporation of Afro-Cuban rhythms and melodies into bop by the now legendary Chano Pozo. At the heart of it all, like a Zen koan - What is the sound of one hand clapping? - is the notion of "cool." As MacAdams notes, "Anyone striving to define 'cool' quickly comes up against cool's quicksilver nature. As soon as anything is 'cool,' its 'cool' starts to vaporize." At is heart though, "cool" is about defiance, which in turn, is kind of what the avant garde is about: an attack on accepted notions of taste and beauty. So here's what flips us out, studs and birds: there weren't three more crazy, double-euphonic, nutty hipsters than Elvis Presley, Nina Simone, and Johnny Cash. They certainly ain't jive. Yet there's no flippin' over their scene? Well, we will make no comments, complaints, criticism, avowals, or appraisals. We'll just watch the river flow, flow, flow, and let what is be, and what is not possibly not be.

This mad, bad MacAdams writer grooves to his own wild, irreverent vibe, and, forsooth, payeth for the gas. Thus, we grant him our kindest indulgences for missing a few stops along the way. (Dom Salemi)

Dwellers In The Mirage - Abraham Merritt (1932/Avon printing 1967)

Avon

Leif Langdon went to Mongolia for college credit as part of a mineral and archeological expedition. His size, strength, and gift for languages permitted him to befriend the local tribesmen until the Uighurs arrived. Then things changed. Lief was treated not as a stranger but as a long-lost tribesman who



had forgotten his home. Language lessons were followed by lessons about the mostly unknown Uighurs and their history. The strange desert tribesmen differed greatly from their neighbors. In a land peopled by short, dark-haired tribesmen, the Uighur's height and blond hair set them apart. And in this part of the world, different usually meant dangerous.

When the Uighurs took Leif from the excavation site, he went along, hoping to cement better relations for the expedition. But when he found that he was expected to be the executioner at a blood sacrifice to the Uighur's god Khalk'ru, Leif left the camp and Mongolia at a dead run.

Back in the United States, Leif and his friend James Two Eagles, a full-blooded Cherokee, traveled to Canada in an effort to get Leif to forget what happened in Mongolia. But fate has drawn Leif north for another reason, and the two men discover an ancient volcanic caldera, covered over with mist, where the remnants of two races still worship ancient gods, including Khalk'ru.

Now Leif is possessed by the ancient spirit of Dwayanu, who may have been Leif in a prior life. Dwayanu is thrust into a battle between a race of gentle pygmies the Little People, and the mother race of the Uighers the Ayjir. Echoes of old Norse mythology follow Dwayanu as he meets Tibur, the smith, and Yodin, ruler of the Ayjir. They praise the return of Dwayanu as he may be the one to bring the return of their god Khalk'ru and the final defeat of the Little People.

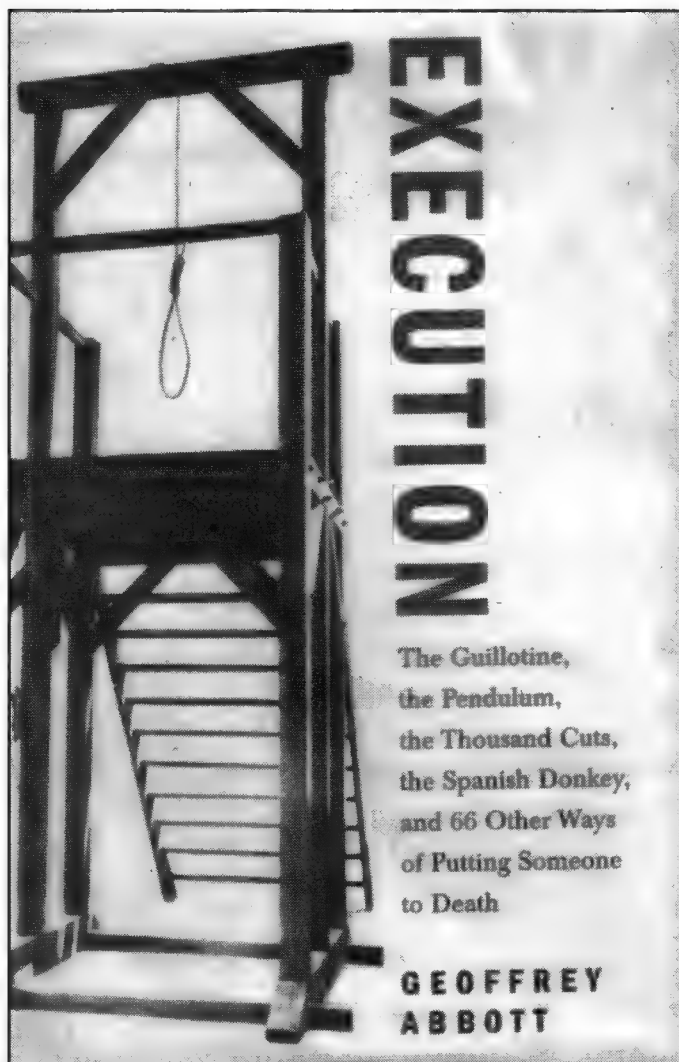
Leif's friend Two Eagles and his new wife Evalie are still with the Little People and working to bring Leif back to his proper self. But Leif (or Dwayanu's) new "allies" are working to bring about the downfall of their new hero, and at the same time take control of the Ayjir from Yodin. The final battle will depend in large part on who commands the warriors of the Ayjir, Leif or Dwayanu.

Abraham Merritt (1884-1943) was a journalist for most of his career with his fiction work only a side diversion. One of the

best-paid journalists of his time, Merritt was a world traveler, which shows in the background of many of his novels. In addition, his interest in exotic orchids, witchcraft, voodoo, and magic, in general, added to the flavor of his stories.

Merritt's works utilize many of the conventional tropes of the old pulp magazines: lost races and civilizations, gigantic monsters, and valiant heroes. His stories often echoed the politics of the time, and his prose fed neatly into the bug-eyed monster/scantily clad heroine themes of the time. Several of Merritt's works are considered to be the base ideas for several movies and some newer television shows. (Jack Hillman)

Execution - Geoffrey Abbott (2005) **St. Martin's Press**



Without doubt, the perfect gift for the literate sadist in your family, *Execution* is compelling and necessary reading for all those seeking to mine the outermost limits of human depravity. So, forewarned is forearmed; Geoffrey Abbott's survey, while learned and most scholarly, is not for the faint of heart or for wearers of rose-colored bifocals. The author, who served as Yeoman Warder aka Beefeater at the Tower of London, clearly relishes his subject. Abbott has not confined his study to recent outrages; rather, he has chosen to scour the globe as well as travel back in time to bring us myriad methods of (judicial) murder and mutilation. It's a complete, although grisly, picture; Abbot spares few details in giving the reader comprehensive descriptions of the instruments employed, and the specific manner in which they were, and are still in all too many cases, able to work their wreckage upon the unwilling human body. Oft times, not too surprisingly, as with electrocutions and hangings, things went horribly wrong. We're not spared this either; in fact, Abbott covers the entire scenario, from victim prep to body disposal. He's merciless; still, that's as it should be; because the work has its origins in the questions we all have but refuse to ask, even in the darkest nights of our souls. That is: Are there any cruelties of which man is not capable? And: Is depravity a matter of nature or nurture? In other words, given the right circumstances, would we too have worked the concentration camps, willingly taken up the cause of the Inquisition? All of which leads to the overwhelming question: Does evil, pure evil, exist? For Abbott, the answer to the last is a resounding, "Yes!"

For allowing yourself to come this far, to peer into the abyss and see it peering back at you, Abbott graces you with the answer to the question conscience and propriety forbid you from even asking yourself; to wit: What is the worst torture ever devised? No, not being sewed up in an animal skin. Nor being drawn and quartered. Not even having a maddened cat eat its way through your entrails. Lo, it is being flayed alive, where under scalpel-like

blades, the victims's skin is peeled away, strip by strip, until the flesh is laid bloodily bare. (Dom Salemi)

Lord Of Light- Roger Zelazny (1967) Mercury Press

"His followers called him Mahasamatman and said he was a god. He preferred to drop the "Maha-" and the "-atman," however, and called himself Sam. He never claimed to be a god, but then he never claimed not to be a god."

And so begins the story of Sam.

When the crew and colonists aboard the Star of India fled the destroyed planet Urath, they reached their new home only to discover an array of sentient creatures and a hostile environment. The crew used a variety of medical and technical techniques to enhance their physical and mental abilities and set up shop as gods. The colonists were permitted their lives only to serve their new deities, and were allowed "reincarnation" - transference into new bodies as their old bodies aged and died - only with the permission of the Trimurti, the ruling council of the gods. Those who failed to pass the brain probe that accompanied the transfer were either shunted into an imperfect body, the body of an animal, or left to die the real death.

But Sam didn't agree with his fellow crewmates. He believed the remnants of the people of Urath deserved freedom, including the freedom to choose their own time of transfer into a new body. He also believed people should be permitted scientific knowledge and experimentation, rather than such activities being limited to the gods. He begins a revolution against the gods, first stealing one of their reincarnation units and a supply of cloned bodies. Then he begins to educate the people into thinking for themselves using the teachings of Buddha as a basis for his ideas. While the revolution initially works, Sam is captured and all the other conspirators are either killed or go into hiding. Sam is cast in his electrical essence into the Heavenly Cloud, a huge magnetic field surrounding the

planet, rather than executed and made into a martyr.

But his fellow conspirators are not idle. After months of work, Sam is recaptured from the Heavenly Cloud and brought back to the planet in human form. He slowly regains his old memory as his electrical essence re-writes his brain, and even recovers his old powers - the ability to direct electrical energy with his mind. It is time for the people to take back their planet from the gods. But will Sam be willing to lead them?

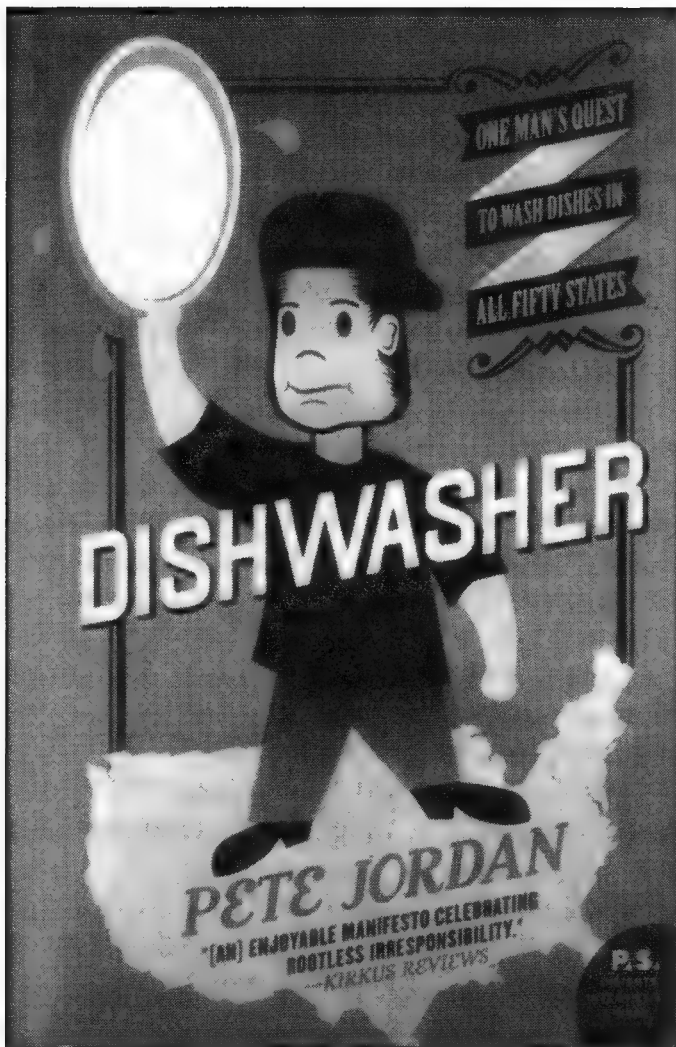
One of several novels written by Roger Zelazny (1937-1995) which used mythology or religious themes as the background of the story, *Lord Of Light* won the Hugo Award in 1968. While not a long novel, especially by today's standards, *Lord of Light* is highly complex and moves back and forth along its own timeline as the story progresses.

Zelazny's works claimed three Nebula Awards (with multiple other nominations), six Hugo Awards (again with multiple nominations), and two *Locus* awards, among several others. *Lord of Light* was opted for a movie in 1979 but never completed for a variety of reasons, although some footage was shot. The initial plans were to use the finished movie sets as the basis for a theme park based on the novel. (Jack Hillman)

Dishwasher - Pete Jordan (2007) Harper Perennial

Ah, those heady Eighties. Apogee of the zine revolution. Not just a revolution in publishing but a revolution in thought. During this explosion of self-publishing, there arose the notion that anyone with access to pen and paper could be a writer, and, furthermore, probably had something interesting to say. This turned out not to be true; still, the movement uncovered a number of talented wordsmiths and produced several memorable books. We can now add *Dishwasher*, the story of one man's quest to clean and stack dishes in all fifty states, to the list.

Why anyone would make this one's goal



is a mystery. According to Gary Alan Fine in his seminal work *Kitchens: The Culture of Restaurant Work*, dishwashers are held in complete contempt. While their continued employment is a necessity for restaurant operations, dishwashers are essentially, in the eyes of both their fellow workers and employers, non-persons. George Orwell, laboring in the dish pits of Paris, considered it a thoroughly odious job, not hard, but boring and silly beyond words.

There's nothing hip about it either; most surveys find "dish dogging," as Jordan whimsically labels it, ranked only ahead of envelope stuffer, prostitute, corner drug-dealer, fortune teller, and panhandler on the coolness meter. Nor does a life immersed in soap suds and scalding hot water pay. According to a Bureau of Labor Statistics survey of more than five hundred occupations, dishwashing comes in last with an annual

average salary of just thirteen thousand dollars.

So, you'd have to be nuts to want to embark on such a life, yes? Well, from 1989 to 2001, Pete Jordan perambulated throughout the land, washing dishes, sleeping on floors, and breaking his back. His reason for refusing to even entertain the notion of attempting to live well? Pete wasn't about to play The Man's game of "getting patted on the head by bosses while trying to get rich in the American dream scam."

That's right, Pete's a heavy reader, an intellectual, and so it isn't long before he starts a journal recounting his experiences. When a fellow dishwasher hips Pete to zines, Jordan hits the copy center with some pages from his journal, boldly and baldly trumpets his life goal therein, and then proceeds to mail, what he now calls *Dishwasher*, to a couple dozen friends he's made along the way. Before too terribly long, the zine's an international hit, and being read by over ten thousand readers. This, in turn, leads to an appearance on David Letterman - with a friend appearing as Pete - an appearance on NPR's "This American Life," and finally, iconic folk status.

Take this to the bank from the publisher of *Brutarian*, a zine that's been around for almost twenty years: there were thousands of underground publications like Pete's back in the day, but *Dishwasher's* wit and lack of pretense made it stand out. And how could you not root for a man "consciously devoted" to a living a life lacking all responsibility? One whose traditions mandated laziness, drunkenness, and walking out on jobs whenever *wanderlust* hit? None of it's romanticized, either. The reader suffers and sweats, gets desperately lonely, and often wonders, along with Pete, whether any of it is worth the misery and unending toil. Of course when something as charming and self-effacing as *Dishwasher* results, one is forced to conclude that it was worth it, worth it after all. And no, Pete didn't make it to all fifty states, but he got the girl, and he wound up in Amsterdam where, at last report, he's

working on a book about bike culture in his adopted town. (Dom Salemi)

Little Fuzzy - H. Beam Piper (1962, reprinted 1988) Ace Books

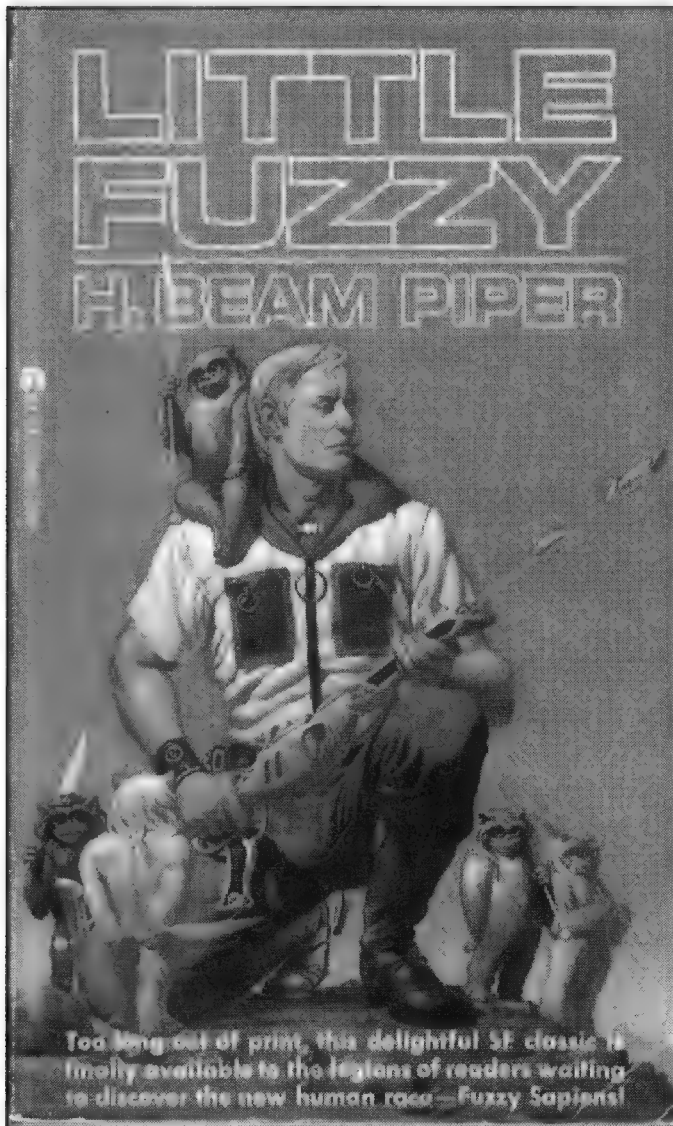
In this variation of the far future, mankind has gone out into the galaxy to form colonies or for business opportunities. The planet Zarathustra is the perfect example of a business capitalizing on serendipity. Zarathustra, an Earth-like planet, had been claimed by the Chartered Zarathustra Company as a place to raise herds and crops for a hungry galaxy. But as the company explored the planet, they made a discovery which turned Zarathustra into the proverbial gold mine: sunstones, fossilized remains of

prehistoric jellyfish laid down in silt layers eons ago with the surrounding rock changed into a flint-like stone and the jellyfish into small pebbles. In some cases, depending on some unknown chemical quirk, the fossilized jellyfish became highly thermo-florescent. When worn on a finger or as a necklace, the stones glow with an inner light. These sunstones are highly prized by jewelers across the galaxy, and the Chartered Zarathustra Company has the monopoly.

However, finding sunstones is a time-consuming and laborious process, so the Company leaves the search to independent prospectors who can only sell their finds to the Company bank at a price set by the Company. Jack Holloway, an independent prospector who had bummed around the galaxy before settling on Zarathustra, is one of the best at finding sunstones. He prefers the solitude of his camp to the company of the cities and believes his life complete in the new home he has made for himself.

One day, coming home from successful cracking of sunstone flint, he notices the door to his cabin open. Cursing himself for absentmindedness, he enters the cabin and checks for local predators or pests, some of which can be very dangerous. What he finds instead is a small, three-foot tall creature covered in golden fur who communicates by simple "yeeks." Holloway adopts the small creature and quickly realizes his new cabin-mate is highly intelligent. As the "fuzzy" and his family, who arrive in the next few days, spend more and more time with Holloway, he realizes they are not only tool-making and using creatures - since they brought with them an array of spears, saws, axes, and other implements - but also highly intelligent, even if all they can say are "yeeks."

One of Holloway's friends, a xeno-naturalist named Rainsford, meets the fuzzies and realizes the danger they pose to the Company. If Zarathustra is inhabited by an intelligent native species, the Company's charter with the Federation is void, and Zarathustra is too good a planet for the Federation to leave in



Company hands.

So the race is on between the “Friends of Fuzzies” and the Chartered Zarathustra Company. Fuzzy friends must prove the sapience of their new acquaintances before the Company hunts them into extinction. And when Holloway’s family of fuzzies is taken for “evidence” and then lost, Holloway comes to deeply feel the removal of a group he has only recently come to love.

Henry Beam Piper (1904-1964) wrote predominately science fiction stories until turning to novels in 1961, exploring the cultural differences between people, as well as the changes that could occur as man reached out into the universe. Dealing mainly with strong, self-reliant characters, Piper’s stories and novels depicted men, or women, who knew what they wanted and worked hard to get it. The first of three *Fuzzy* novels, *Little Fuzzy*, was joined after Piper’s death by two additional novels based on his notes and outlines. Piper remains one of the most influential writers of the early twentieth Century, and in 1999 won a Prometheus Award for Best Classic Literature for his novel *Lone Star Planet*, originally released in 1958. (Jack Hillman)

Rigor Mortis - ed. Davida Gypsy Breier (2009) Zombie Panic Attack Publications

Zines not dead! Rather, they are undead, apparently clawing their way out of their collective graves and launching a comeback. An antidote and anodyne to the halcyon days of independent underground publishing, when information was shared and correspondance was by letter and/or gift of one’s own publication. A time when people not only read, but actually used their library cards. Literacy abided, literature abounded. That’s right, what zines were about then, regardless of the publisher’s concerns or preoccupations or fetishes, was writing. Not just the expression of ideas but the effective

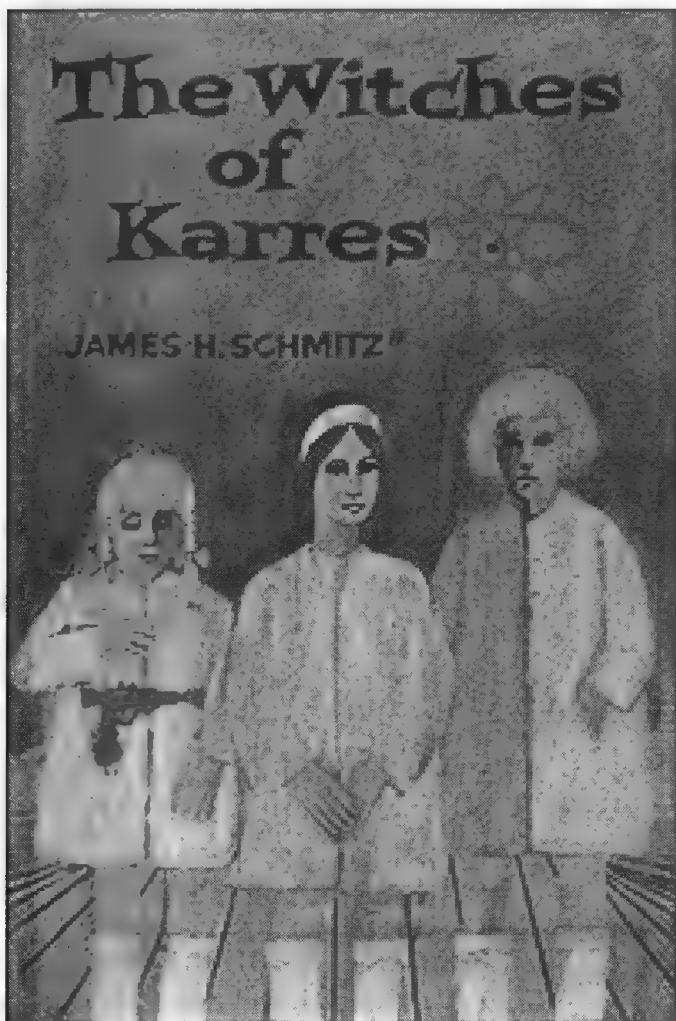


expression of ideas. Toward that end, we have a professional in the library sciences at the helm of a nifty little 8 1/2 x 11, black-and-white, foldover pub concerning itself with all things zombie. Stuffed near-to-bursting with reviews of the undead as portrayed in movies, books and graphic novels. And it makes for good reading what with the writerly approach the contributors take to things. Some of the critiques find the reviewers directly interjecting themselves into the experience of reading the book, others utilize the work as a springboard for diving into memory and experience a la Proust or Joyce. Dread Sockett spends several pages and a couple of thousand words deconstructing the art and the narrative strategies employed in two graphic novels which have caught his muse in flight. It’s a terrific approach: carnival culture for the inquisitive intellectual. And it’s adorned, that

is to say, profusely illustrated with ghoulishly atavistic art courtesy of a diabolically clever humanoid known only as Bojan. His work, while betraying the influences of Robert Crumb and Basil Gogos, is fiendishly original and simply leaps off the page. The fact that it also goes for the jugular is all to the good. Fifty-four packed pages, including a pictorial history of Tom Savini accompanied by a complete filmography, a three page guide to zombie websites, and a celebration of the most dreadful - that's a good thing - achievements in the genre in 2008. (Dom Salemi)

The Witches Of Karres - James H. Schmitz (1966- re- released 2004) Baen Books

A well-intentioned but naive merchant Captain Nicholas Pausert leaves his home



world of Nikkeldepain with a ship full of mostly useless cargo to make his fortune. A few strokes of good luck leave the Captain on the planet of Porlomma, the recipient of an emergency medical supply run, with the Captain earning a tidy profit and most of his cargo sold. Time to return home and claim his prize: the hand of the ship owner's daughter. This is when Pausert's luck changes.

Privately owned slaves are illegal on most of the worlds of the Empire, but Porlomma wasn't exactly a member of the Empire. Pausert sees a man beating a young girl, the man's slave, and virtuously steps in to stop the assault. Following a brief altercation, Pausert finds himself standing in front of a local magistrate and now in possession of the young slave Maleen of Karres. Maleen convinces the captain to also purchase her two sisters before he leaves Porlomma.

The three sisters are from the planet Karres, long known by the Empire as a planet of witches. People from Karres have an array of psi abilities no one else in the galaxy has: precognition, teleportation, telepathy, projective illusions, and other tricks of the mind. But their most potent power, the one the Empire wants in the worst way, is the Sheewash Drive. With the Drive, Karres is able to move the entire planet halfway across the galaxy, if needed, to avoid people who want to use Karres' witches for their own purposes. That power is worth turning the entire planet of Karres into slaves, according to the Empire.

Pausert returns the young girls to their home planet and is invited to stay. But the Captain has plans to return home and claim his bride. He leaves Karres with a cargo of native products, which are worthless on any planet of the Empire by an act of Imperial law, and arrives home only to find his girl is married to his worst enemy, and he himself now a marked man with a high price on his head. Pausert escapes Nikkeldepain with the aid of Goth, who stowed away before leaving Karres, using the Sheewash Drive. So begin their adventures across the galaxy . . .

Initially written in 1949 as a novelette, James H. Schmitz (1911-1981) expanded the story into a novel in 1966 by adding three more novelettes. Known for his space opera stories and strong female characters, Schmitz built the stores of Karres into his "Hub" outline of future history. The three female witches in this novel are prime examples of Karres' woman: females well able to match any man in accomplishment or deed. His major characters, both male and female, often possess highly advanced mental abilities as well.

A sequel to this novel titled *The Wizard Of Karres*, written by Mercedes Lackey, Eric Flint and David Freer, was released by Baen Books in 2004. (Jack Hillman)

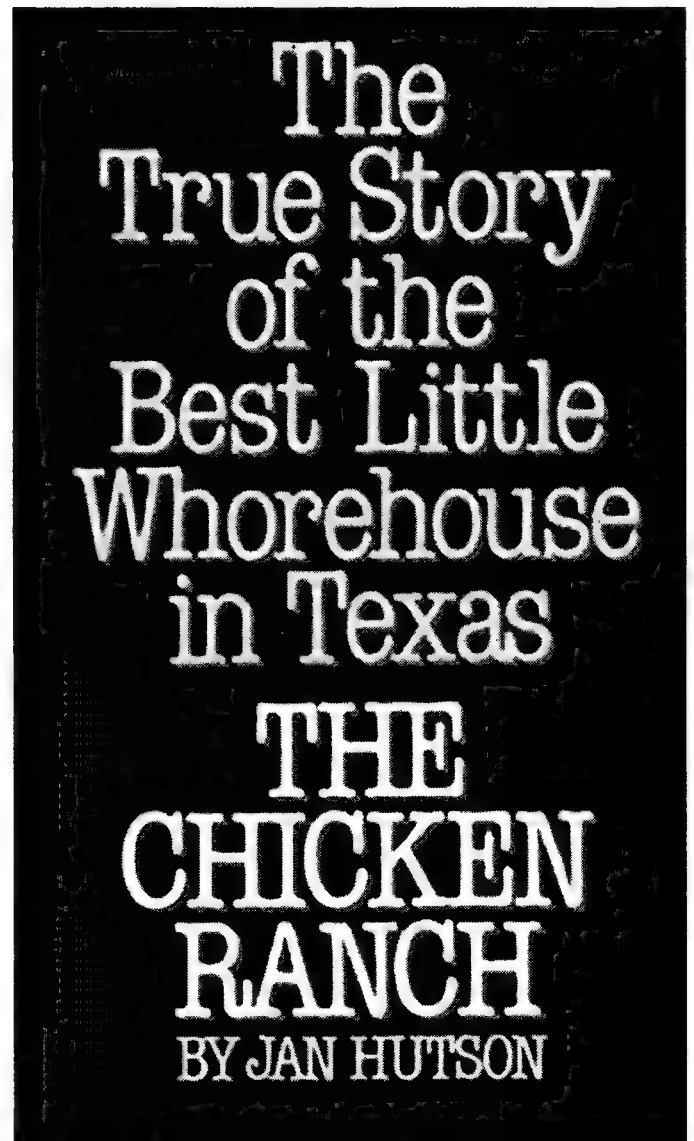
The Chicken Ranch: The True Story of the Best Little Whorehouse in Texas - Jan Hutson (2000) Author's Choice Press

The Chicken Ranch is quite possibly the most famous brothel in the world, or at least the most famous former brothel. Founded in the rural community of La Grange during the Republic of Texas, it became the oldest continuously operating bordello in the United States by the time of its abrupt and highly publicized closure in 1974. The circumstances surrounding its abrupt demise were as dramatic as they were farcical - enough so that it inspired a Broadway musical, later adapted to the big screen as *The Best Little Whorehouse in Texas*.

The stage play and movie tell the story in broad but more or less accurate strokes. Marvin Zindler, a former police officer turned ambitious consumer affairs reporter for a Houston television station, saw the Chicken Ranch as a quick path to stardom. Zindler stirred up such a hue and cry that Texas Governor Dolph Briscoe eventually ordered the brothel shut down permanently - over the objections of Sheriff Jim Flournoy, the district attorney, the citizens of La Grange, and a

significant portion of the statewide population. If ever there were a foolproof subject for book treatment, the Chicken Ranch was it.

Sadly, Jan Hutson sets out to prove that assumption false, and damn near succeeds. *The Chicken Ranch: The True Story of the Best Little Whorehouse in Texas* isn't unreadable, but only just. The mind boggles at how anyone could take a story literally dripping with sex and scandal and turn it into anything but a juicy page-turner, but Hutson turns the trick by talking about lots of stuff other than the sex and scandal. The already slim book at one hundred fifteen pages is filled with quite a bit of padding. Hutson takes an entire chapter to give a rambling, tangential history of the town of La Grange,



the high point of which is an uncomfortable rant about how the Native Americans living in the area were stupid, smelly brutes who could scarcely be called human, and therefore deserving of extermination by the brave and noble European settlers. When she finally gets around to talking about prostitution, she makes bold statements such as none of the whores working at the Chicken Ranch ever got pregnant despite the absence of condoms, since the semen of multiple men would cancel each other out. Sort of like spermicidal gladiatorial combat, I suppose.

Hutson's work provides a general overview of the history of the Chicken Ranch, tracing the various madams who ran the operation (none, unfortunately, looked much at all like Dolly Parton) and some of the high points in the brothel's history. It earned its distinctive name, for instance, when the destitute client base couldn't afford to pay cash for services, so poultry was offered instead. She paints a fairly convincing portrait of Mrs. Swine, the strikingly ugly woman who introduced La Grange to organized prostitution only to be run out of town at the outbreak of the Civil War as a Yankee sympathizer. Yet all of this comes from history books, and newspaper and magazine accounts. Valuable sources, yes, but static, preserved in amber. Dust-covered tomes and yellowed, crumbling newsprint are wholly insufficient for such a dynamic topic.

And that, in a nutshell, is Hutson's greatest failing, her unforgivable sin. Originally published in 1980 *The Chicken Ranch* was researched and written at a time where all of the major players in the drama of the brothel's final days were alive and well, yet there is little hint that Hutson attempted to interview any of them for her book. There are numerous quotes from Sheriff Flournoy in the book, but Hutson's gossipy writing style is so distracting that it's never entirely clear if the words were heard directly from Flournoy or picked up second-hand. Likewise, there's nothing here from Governor Briscoe, the state attorney general, or the Ranch's final madam Edna Milton, who was performing

on Broadway at the time in *The Best Little Whorehouse in Texas*, naturally enough. The closest Hutson comes is an anonymous former prostitute, but instead of pumping her for her unique insight on the goings-on at the Chicken Ranch, Hutson instead chooses to focus on the woman's wealth and affluent lifestyle attained by marrying, then divorcing, a string of rich men in rapid succession. Those bizarre choices are as infuriating as they are baffling. Worse, they're left unexplained.

The end result is an uninspired mess, a tittering, high-schoolish interpretation of a long-running slice of Texas - and by default, American - history. Not sophisticated enough to qualify as an academic study, nor sleazy enough to qualify as a guilty pleasure, *The Chicken Ranch: The True Story of the Best Little Whorehouse in Texas* has all the socially redeeming value of a PG-13 edit of *Deep Throat*. (Jayme Lynn Blaschke)

Virgin Planet - Poul Anderson (1959, re-released 2000) Baen Books

It had been three centuries since the colony ships left Earth, and not all of them told the government in charge where they were going. So when independent explorer Davis Bertram dropped down on an unexplored world only to find it inhabited, he was both excited and confused.

Some of the early colony ships sent all the men in the first wave in order to permit development of the planet with fewer distractions. The follow-up ship held the female contingent of the colony, along with more advanced medical equipment and additional livestock. But the area around the star Delta Capitis Lupi held a surprise for spacegoing craft - a vortex that could shatter a ship to pieces or throw them halfway across the galaxy. The ship carrying the female colonists passed through the vortex in one piece, but crashed on an unidentified planet, unable to lift and unable to communicate with either their new colony or with the people

back home. And with a large part of the crew dead in the landing.

So for three centuries, the remaining women survived on the planet they named Atlantis the only way they could, reproducing by parthenogenesis. By chemically stimulating the ova to divide, a woman could produce an offspring who was genetically identical with herself. Not a clone, the new child had the same physical attributes and abilities as the mother, but lacked any education or training. Over the centuries, the women of the planet had built a civilization by limiting offspring to a select number of women. Some towns were even made up of offspring related to only a single-surviving crewperson.

And now, for the first time in three hundred years, a man is on the planet. But the legends passed down from mother to daughter warned about creatures from the sky. Men would come some day to save the planet, but the women would also have to watch out for monsters. Monsters who looked like men and who wished only to enslave the women of the planet for their own evil purposes.

So Davis Bertram finds himself roped like a steer by Corporal Maiden Barbara Whitley of Freetoon and dragged behind an orsper like a sack, back to town. There he is placed on trial to prove he is a man, not a monster.

Making matters worse, the planet is governed by a religious hierarchy, which controls the remains of the ship and the parthinogenesis machines, machines which permit the towns to continue to reproduce and grow. Any town not following the guidelines of the Sisters from the Ship finds the town dying off, as no more children are permitted to be born.

Cut off from his ship, Davis finds he must not only convince the women of Atlantis that he is a man, but that more men will come to either stay with them on Atlantis or take the women back to civilization.

In this ultimate of first-date stories, Poul Anderson (1926-2001) has written the ultimate male-female confrontation. To women who have never seen a man in their

entire lives, the idea of some other creature mating with a woman to create offspring is like a horror story. Since there are no mammals on Atlantis, all the women understand about reproduction are laying eggs, or going to the ship and coming back pregnant thorough the Holy Mysteries.

Another of the Golden Age writers Anderson was well known for heroic, larger-than-life characters and settings. A physicist by training, Anderson wrote stories that were well-founded in science and grounded in a fierce belief in personal freedoms. Anderson was one of many authors who saw the vastness of space and its wide frontier as a stage for mankind's growth or collapse. Anderson repeated both in the tone of his stories and in numerous essays, arguing that space flight was a necessity for mankind's growth and preventing civilization from degenerating into "a society of brigands ruling over peasants." (Jack Hillman)

The Einstein Intersection - Samuel R. Delany (1998) Wesleyan

I always get nervous right before I start to read something by Delany. Not that I'm afraid that it will be drek, but rather I know almost with an unfailing certainty I will feel pretty stupid when I finish it. Stupid, as in "Damn, that Delany's operating on a plane so far above me I can feel my IQ points dribbling out my ears with each page I turn." There are a handful of writers who invariably have this effect on me, a list I shall not provide now because I must maintain some shred of dignity.

But I found *The Einstein Intersection* (originally published 1967) clever and engaging. Quite accessible, in fact, which in some cosmic sense must relegate it among Delany's lesser works. Tough. Were I to recommend a book to serve as an introduction to Delany's work, *The Einstein Intersection* would certainly top the list.

Maybe it's because I'm a mythology junkie. Ancient myths and legends - even

not-so-ancient ones - are fascinating, and Delany weaves his entire novel around the concept that our myths will carry on long after humanity itself has departed this Earth. In our place, mutable, genetically volatile aliens from the stars have taken our place, and taken the roles and identities of our mythologies upon themselves with a fatalistic determination.

From the opening scenes in which the Orpheus-like protagonist Lobey descends into ancient caverns containing aloof computers to battle a giant, minotaur-esque bull, it's clear that Delany is out to deliver more than a simple post-apocalyptic tale, or a revamped fairy tale with science-fictional trappings. Instead, he pushes much harder, conjuring up mythological archetypes such as the Betrayer and the Sacrificial Lamb. Contemporary pop

culture plays its part as well, at least circa 1967, with Elvis and the Beatles ascending to their own places of honor within the mythological hierarchy. They literally don't write them like this anymore.

After Lobey's love Friza is killed by the red-headed, gill-necked Kid Death, Lobey embarks on a mission of vengeance, hoping against hope to return his love to the lands of the living. Armed only with his machete, which has a kind of flute or fife fashioned along the back of the blade, Lobey sets off on his quest, playing music as he goes. Along the way, Kid Death torments him with casual cruelty and glimpses of Friza. Dragon herders arrive in a surreal parody of Old West cattle drives, along with the mild-tempered Green Eye, who has taken up the doomed mantle of the Christ figure, or Odin, or more likely both. The final resolution is both appropriate and ambiguous, leaving the reader somewhat unsure as to just what has been accomplished.

Of special interest is the inclusion of passages from Delany's journal, conversation fragments, and relevant quotes from literature at the start of different chapters. More than simple epigraphs, the passages reference the period of time Delany was writing each chapter, and often reference specific plot points and the motivation behind certain decisions on the author's part as well. Kid Death began as a dark-haired being before a chance encounter inspires a color change. Jean Harlow, "The Great White Bitch," inspired the Dove, the embodiment of love and sex and desire. This deconstructionist approach seems irrelevant at first, and as the narrative progresses, appears to undermine the story before ultimately revealing (and reveling in) the fluid, mutable nature of myth.

Ultimately, *The Einstein Intersection* is a strange, contemplative, and ambitious work. It's short and to the point, packing a surprising amount of adventure and ideas into a relatively short number of pages. Equal parts fantasy and science fiction, and clearly a product of the heady New Wave movement, this is a book that holds many secrets and is



slow to give them up. It's not surprising that it won the 1967 Nebula Award for best novel. I strongly suspect that this is one of those rare works that improve with subsequent readings as nuanced layers invisible during earlier visits open themselves up to the reader. I fully intend to test that theory someday, because even if I'm wrong, at the very least, I've re-read a good book. (Jayme Lynn Blaschke)

Faerie Tale - Raymond Fiest (1988) Doubleday

Phil Hastings was that rare bird - a well-paid writer. When the screenplay he wrote connected with Hollywood, spawned three sequels, and brought in a lot of money for him, he decided to move back home to New York state and concentrate on writing novels again. So he packed up his family from their California home and landed on an old German farmstead in upper New York.

The eight-year-old twins took to the town and the woods surrounding the farm quite well, and Hastings' college-age daughter latched on to the young, male grad student studying nearby, so it looked like things were going well for the family. The house had a collection of old books left over from the prior owner, and Hastings made a deal with two collectors to catalogue the collection and get first choice on any books he chose to sell. The books were an eclectic array of the occult and old Germanic and Celtic stories with some of the books possibly worth a lot of money if true first editions.

Then things start to go wrong. Hastings' wife Gloria consistently feels she is being watched through the windows at night. Hastings daughter Gabrielle is almost raped in the barn by a mysterious young man, and Patrick, the more adventurous of the twins, is swept under a bridge during a flash flood. The doctor's report states Patrick has been cut by the branches lodged under the bridge, but both boys know Patrick was attacked by the Bad Thing living in their woods.

The two men going through the books

and records left by the prior owner locate documents showing fraud involving a cache of gold and, suddenly, the search is on for the treasure. In a short time, a box of gold coins is located, with some of the coins going back hundreds of years. Hastings takes some of the coins to an appraiser for review thinking his family has a new windfall that will make them all rich. But removing the coins from the property breaks an ancient compact with Faerie.

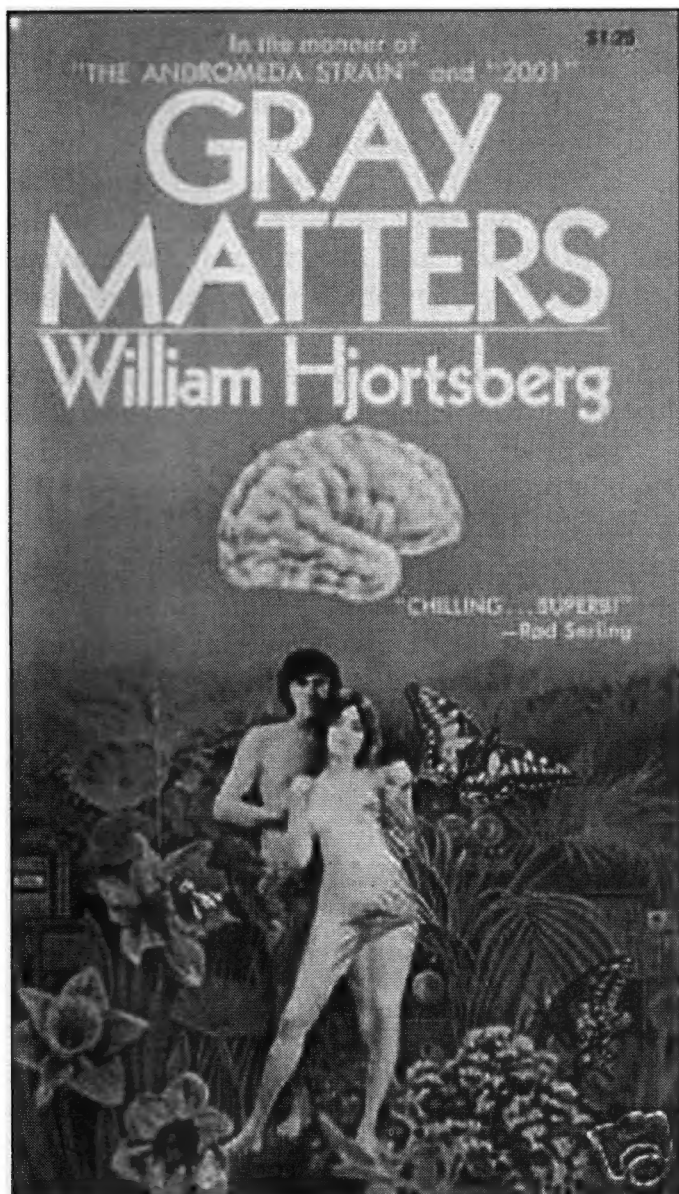
Hastings' son Patrick is replaced by a changeling, and while Hastings battles to bring the gold back and try to repair the compact, it falls to young Sean to save his brother and his family.

While best known for his *Riftwar Saga* Raymond Feist (b.1945) placed in this dark fantasy set in modern times, the very real possibility that what you don't know can kill you. Feist brings to his dark tale a history so old most do not even know of its roots, much less the details of the older time. In this shadowed world, other creatures holding human-level intelligence lived on this planet prior to mankind, and when man does not abide by the agreements the results can be deadly.

A haunting, well-told story *Faerie Tale* is very reminiscent of the original Brothers Grimm's Faery Tales and the admonition to watch what you say, and always treat strangers with both respect and caution. (Jack Hillman)

Gray Matters - William Hjortsberg (1979) Pocket

There are certain science fiction tropes that are hallmarks of the genre. Then there are a few that have grown beyond usefulness and turned into clichés. And then there are the select handful that have transcended cliché and taken on a snarky, absurdist quasi-life of their own, independent of any genre. They become *über*-clichés. You know the list I'm talking about: 1) The bug-eyed alien; 2) The killer robot; 3) The mad scientist; 4) His



beautiful, naive daughter; 5) The sinister utopia; and 6) The brain in a jar. Vehicles so rattletrap no writer worth a bucket of warm spit would dare consider hitching a story to such an engine of guaranteed ridicule.

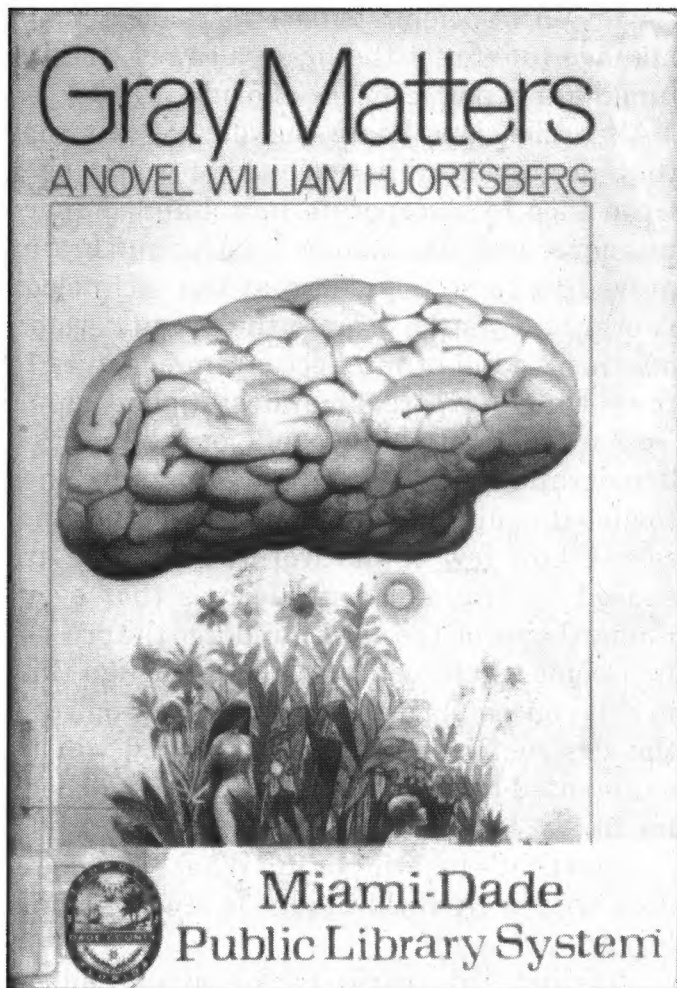
So what does William Hjortsberg dare write about in *Gray Matters*? Brains in jars! And not just one brain, either. Oh, no, brother. Not this guy. He goes for broke, giving us not thousands, not millions, but literally billions of brains in jars - the entire human race, in fact. Several centuries' worth of generations of the human race, starting with Denton "Skeets" Kalbfleischer, a twelve-year old boy who had the fortune (or misfortune) to be the only survivor of a airline disaster in the early 1970s. His body ruined beyond hope,

clever NASA scientists (see *über*-cliché no. 3) manage to extract the brain and preserve it, functioning perfectly, in the ubiquitous jar. NASA scientists, being the clever sorts that they are, eventually decide this would be a Good Idea to incorporate into manned space missions, and disembodied astronaut brains proved to be so popular that the technology is eventually spun off into the private sector, offering a kind of intellectual immortality to those whose corporeal manifestation is kaput.

As more and more people join the pickled demographic, a benevolent dictatorship comes to global domination as they so often do, and, seeing how few of the world's problems are caused by brains-in-jars, decrees that every human being on the planet undergo the process to become cerebromorphs. Given enough time in this contemplative state, the thinking goes, the destructive nature of humanity will be supplanted by enlightenment (see *über*-cliché no. 5).

And that's just the setup. What Hjortsberg does with it from that point is stuff of which legends are made.

Against this eerie backdrop of endless subterranean brain vaults patrolled by maintenance robots (see *über*-cliché no. 2 - it's a stretch, but the robots do kill before the book ends), Hjortsberg drapes a complex mosaic of divergent storylines. We learn of Skeets, who, despite centuries of contemplation, is no closer to enlightenment, but instead wants to be a cowboy; auditor Philip Quarrels, Skeets' frustrated counselor and one-time astronaut, who voluntarily became a cerebromorph in order to explore the outer reaches of the solar system; Vera Mitlovic, a former European film superstar with a decidedly unstable temperament and an insatiable taste for kinky sex; and artist Obu Itubi, who's brooding desire to be a complete human again has grown into an almost pathological hatred of the machine overlords who operate the vast brain depositories. The narrative unfolds as a surreal "six degrees of separation" (aka the "Kevin Bacon Game") meets the "butterfly effect." Some of these body-lacking characters



have encountered each other in passing - others haven't. But through complicated chains of seemingly unrelated events, it soon becomes clear that the actions of each invariably have lasting repercussions on the others.

Hjortsberg delights in turning the reader's expectations on their collective ear, revels in beating hoary old chestnuts into strange, mutated forms, passing only on bug-eyed monsters and naive scientist daughters. *Gray Matters* is often a shocking book, and at the very least revels in the unexpected. Vera's violent tendencies and relentless pursuit of graphic virtual sex doesn't pack the scandalous

punch it had back when first published, but it still manages an in-your-face challenge to the reader, leaving no doubt that this is one brain that houses one seriously damaged psyche.

Hjortsberg plays the same game with Obu, allowing the reader to incorporate all the standard "creative, artsy-type" stereotypes into their perception of the character, then systematically dismantles them one by one. In the process - as Obu mounts an audacious and spectacular escape from the brain vaults - Hjortsberg also launches a subversive assault on the reader's innate revulsion at the prospect of a society of identityless brains in jars, showing us through Obu's increasingly self-centered and reckless behaviors just how necessary such a radical societal structure is. And just for good measure, once the reader accepts that this sinister utopia is actually benevolent after all, Hjortsberg metaphorically yanks the rug out from under the reader, leaving the decidedly uncomfortable feeling that the cure is worse than the disease.

There are a lot of nice touches here, subtle details that are easy to overlook - the genetically engineered Amphibios, the bureaucratically oppressed computer overlords - but which generate a striking verisimilitude that allows the reader to accept that this insane, dysfunctional system really did progressively evolve over a millennia.

In the end, *Gray Matters* is an audacious, daring book that challenges the reader by offering up absolutely no easy answers. And that's probably the ultimate joke by Hjortsberg, because every character, every decision, every reality contained in the book is defined by shades of gray. Nothing is as simple as black and white, and the reader carries mixed feelings away about everything in the book.

Except for Skeets. Damn, but I hope that kid gets to be a cowboy when he grows up. (Jayme Lee Blaschke)



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